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A Dutch Woman

By Mrs. Stanhope Forbes



Dogs, Cats, Books, and the Average Man

A Letter to the Editor

From "The Yellow Dwarf"

S^{IR}: I hope you will not suspect me of making a bid for his affection, when I remark that the Average Man loves the Obvious. By consequence (for, like all unthinking creatures, the duffer's logical), by consequence, his attitude towards the Subtle, the Elusive, when not an attitude of mere torpid indifference, is an attitude of positive distrust and dislike.

Of this ignoble fact, pretty nearly everything—from the popularity of beer and skittles, to the popularity of Mr. Hall Caine's novels; from the general's distaste for caviare, to the general's neglect of Mr. Henry James's tales—pretty nearly everything is a reminder. But, to go no further afield, for the moment, than his own hearthrug, may I ask you to consider a little the relative positions occupied in the Average Man's regard by the Dog and the Cat?

The Average Man ostentatiously loves the Dog.

The Average Man, when he is not torpidly indifferent to that princely animal, positively distrusts and dislikes the Cat.

I have used the epithet "princely" with intention, in speaking
of

of the near relative of the King of Beasts. The Cat is a Princess of the Blood. Yes, my dear, always a Princess, though the Average Man, with his unerring instinct for the malappropriate word, sometimes names her Thomas. The Cat is always a Princess, because everything nice in this world, everything fine, sensitive, distinguished, everything beautiful, everything worth while, is of essence Feminine, though it may be male by the accident of sex;—and that's as true as gospel, let Mr. W. E. Henley's lusty young disciples shout their loudest in celebration of the Virile.—The Cat is a Princess.

The Dog, on the contrary, is not even a gentleman. Far otherwise. His admirers may do what they will to forget it, the circumstance remains, writ large in every Natural History, that the Dog is sprung from quite the meanest family of the Quadrupeds. That coward thief the wolf is his bastard brother; the carrion hyena is his cousin-german. And in his person, as in his character, bears he not an hundred marks of his base descent? In his rough coat (contrast it with the silken mantle of the Cat); in his harsh, monotonous voice (contrast it with the flexible organ of the Cat, her versatile mewings, chirrupings, and purrings, and their innumerable shades and modulations); in the stiff-jointed clumsiness of his movements (compare them to the inexpressible grace and suppleness of the Cat's); briefly, in the all-pervading plebeian commonness that hangs about him like an atmosphere (compare it to the high-bred reserve and dignity that invest the Cat). The wolf's brother, is the Dog not himself a coward? Watch him when, emulating the ruffian who insults an unprotected lady, he puts a Cat to flight in the streets: watch him when the lady halts and turns. Faugh, the craven! with his wild show of savagery so long as there is not the slightest danger—and his sudden chopfallen drawing back when the lady halts and turns!

turns! The hyena's cousin, is he not himself of carrion an impassioned amateur? At Constantinople he serves ('tis a labour of love; he receives no stipend) he serves as Public Scavenger, swallowing with greed the ordures cast by the Turk. Scripture tells us to what he returneth: who has failed to observe that he returneth not to his own alone? And the other day, strolling upon the sands by the illimitable sea, I came upon a friend and her pet terrier. She was holding the little beggar by the scruff of his neck, and giving him repeated sousings in a pool. I stood a pleased spectator of this exercise, for the terrier kicked and spluttered and appeared to be unhappy. "He found a decaying jelly-fish below there, and rolled in it," my friend pathetically explained. I should like to see the Cat who could be induced to roll in a decaying jelly-fish. The Cat's fastidiousness, her meticulous cleanliness, the time and the pains she bestows upon her toilet, and her almost morbid delicacy about certain more private errands, are among the material indications of her patrician nature. It were needless to allude to the vile habits and impudicity of the Dog.

Have you ever met a Dog who wasn't a bounder? Have you ever met a Dog who wasn't a bully, a sycophant, and a snob? Have you ever met a Cat who was? Have you ever met a Cat who would half frighten a timid little girl to death, by rushing at her and barking? Have you ever met a Cat who, left alone with a visitor in your drawing-room, would truculently growl and show her teeth, as often as that visitor ventured to stir in his chair? Have you ever met a Cat who would snarl and snap at the servants, Mawster's back being turned? Have you ever met a Cat who would cringe to you and fawn to you, and kiss the hand that smote her?

Conscious of her high lineage, the Cat understands and accepts
the

the responsibilities that attach to it. She knows what she owes to herself, to her rank, to the Royal Idea. Therefore, it is you who must be the courtier. The Dog, poor-spirited toady, will study your eye to divine your mood, and slavishly adapt his own mood and his behaviour to it. Not so the Cat. As between you and her, it is you who must do the toadying. A guest in the house, never a dependent, she remembers always the courtesy and the consideration that are her due. You must respect her pleasure. Is it her pleasure to slumber, and do you disturb her : note the disdainful melancholy with which she silently comments your rudeness. Is it her pleasure to be grave : tempt her to frolic, you will tempt in vain. Is it her pleasure to be cold : nothing in human possibility can win a caress from her. Is it her pleasure to be rid of your presence : only the physical influence of a closed door will persuade her to remain in the room with you. It is you who must be the courtier, and wait upon her desire.

But then !

When, in her own good time, she chooses to unbend, how graciously, how entrancingly, she does it ! Oh, the thousand wonderful lovelinesses and surprises of her play ! The wit, the humour, the imagination, that inform it ! Her ruses, her false leads, her sudden triumphs, her feigned despairs ! And the topazes and emeralds that sparkle in her eyes ; the satiny lustre of her apparel ; the delicious sinuosities of her body ! And her parenthetic interruptions of the game : to stride in regal progress round the apartment, flourishing her tail like a banner : or coquettishly to throw herself in some enravishing posture at length upon the carpet at your feet : or (if she loves you) to leap upon your shoulder, and press her cheek to yours, and murmur rapturous assurances of her passion ! To be loved by a Princess ! Whosoever, from the Marquis de Carabas down, has been loved by

by a Cat, has savoured that felicity. My own particular treasure of a Cat, at this particular moment is lying wreathed about my neck, watching my pen as it moves along the paper, and purring approbation of my views. But when, from time to time, I chance to use a word that doesn't strike her altogether as the fittest, she reaches down her little velvet paw, and dabs it out. I should like to see the Dog who could do that.

But—the Cat is subtle, the Cat is elusive, the Cat is not to be read at a glance, the Cat is not a simple equation. And so the Average Man, gross mutton-devouring, money-grubbing mechanism that he is, when he doesn't just torpidly tolerate her, distrusts her and dislikes her. A great soul, misappreciated, misunderstood, she sits neglected in his chimney-corner; and the fatuous idgit never guesses how she scorns him.

But—the Dog is obvious. Any fool can grasp the meaning of the Dog. And the Average Man, accordingly, recreant for once to the snobbism which is his religion, hugs the hyena's cousin to his bosom.

What of it?

Only this: that in the Average Man's sentimental attitude towards the Dog and the Cat, we have a formula, a symbol, for his sentimental attitude towards many things, especially for his sentimental attitude towards Books.

Some books, in their uncouthness, their awkwardness, their boisterousness, in their violation of the decencies of art, in their low truckling to the tastes of the purchaser, in their commonness, their vulgarity, in their total lack of suppleness and distinction, are the very Dogs of Bookland. The Average Man loves 'em. Such as they are, they're obvious.

And other books, by reason of their beauties and their virtues,
their

their graces and refinements; because they are considered finished; because they are delicate, distinguished, aristocratic; because their touch is light, their movement deft and fleet; because they proceed by omission, by implication and suggestion; because they employ the *demi-mot* and the *nuance*; because, in fine, they are Subtle—other books are the Cats of Bookland. And the Average Man hates them or ignores them.

Yes. Literature broadly divides itself into Cat-Literature, despised and rejected of the Average Man, and Dog-Literature, adopted and petted by him. What is more like the ponderous, slow-strutting, dull-witted Mastiff, than the writing of our tedious friend Mr. Caine? What more like a formless, unclipped white Poodle, with pink eyes, than the gushing of Miss Corelli? In the lucubrations of Mr. J. K. Jerome and his School, do we not recognise the Dog of the Public House, grinning and wagging his tail and performing his round of inexpensive tricks for whoso will chuck him a biscuit? And in the long-drawn bellowings of Dr. Nordau, hear we not the distempered Hound complaining to the moon? The books of Mr. Conan Doyle are as a litter of assorted Mongrels, going cheap—*regardez moi leurs pattes!* Mr. Anthony Hope produces the smart Fox Terrier; Mr. George Moore, the laborious Dachshund; whilst Messrs. Crockett and MacLaren breed you the sanctimonious Collie. To cross the Channel, for an instant, we find the works of Mons. Crapule Mendès, poking their noses into whatever nastiness is going, and doing the other usual canine thing. And then, to come back to England, and to turn our attention upon Journalism, we mustn't forget *Mr. Punch's* collaborator Toby; nor Lo-Ben, the former ruling spirit of the *Pall Mall Gazette*; nor the Jackals and Pariahs of Lower Grubb Street; nor the Butcher's Dog, whose carnivorous yawling is the predominant
note

note of a certain sixpenny weekly, which I will not advertise by naming.

Cat-Literature, in the nature of things, it is less easy to put one's finger on. Good books have such an unpleasant way of being rare. Still, in Paris, there are MM. France, Bourget, and Pierre Loti (oh, that sweet Pierre Loti, with his Moumoutte Blanche and his Moumoutte Chinoise !); and, in England, at least two or three Literary Cats are born every year. There are many sorts of Cats, to be sure; and some Cats are not so nice as other Cats; but even the shabbiest, drabbiest Cat, lurking in the area, is interesting to those who have learned the Cat language, and so can commune with her. That is one of the prettiest differences between the Dog and the Cat:—the Dog will learn your language, but you must learn the Cat's. Dog-Literature is written in the language of the Average Man, a crude, unlovely language, necessarily. Cat-Literature is written in a complex shaded language all its own, which the Average Man is too stupid or too indolent to learn.

Yes, even in poor old England, we may be thankful, a Literary Cat is born two or three times a year. Miss Dowie and Miss D'Arcy, Mr. Grahame, Mrs. Meynell, Mr. Crackanthorpe—they are among the most careful and successful of our native breeders. Mr. Harland has given us some very pretty Grey Kittens; and for the artificially educated Cat, in green apron and periwig, we naturally turn to Mr. Beerbohm — whose collected works, by the bye, I am glad to see have at last been published, accompanied by a charming Cat-like bibliography and preface from the hand of Mr. Lane. But of course, in any proper Cat Show, the Cats of Mr. Henry James would carry off the special grand *prix d'honneur*.

And now, Mr. Editor, these philosophical reflections may be not inappositely punctuated by a piece of news.

I beg

I beg to announce to you the recent appearance in Cat-Literature of a highly curious and diverting sport or variation. Perhaps your attention has already been directed to it? Have you seen *March Hares*?

March Hares, by George Forth, is a most spirited, lithe-limbed, and surprising Cat. It will mystify and irritate the Average Man, as much as it will rejoice his betters. He will discover that he has been made a fool of, at the end of every bout; for it is Cat's play perpetually—a malicious sequence of ruses and false leads. He will declare that it is madder even than its name, for the method that governs its capricious pirouettings is a method much too subtle for his coarse senses to apprehend. Indeed, I can almost hope that *March Hares* was conceived and brought to parturition, for the deliberate purpose of giving the Average Man a headache. If it were frank Opéra-bouffe, he wouldn't mind; but it is Opéra-bouffe masquerading as legitimate drama. The Average Man will take it seriously—and presently begin to stare and swear. He will feel as if Harlequin were circling round him, jeering at him and flouting him, making disrespectful gestures in his face, whacking his skull with wooden sword, and throwing his sluggish intellects promiscuously into a whirl of bewilderment and anger.

Mr. David Mosscrop, self-defined as an habitual criminal, is a dissipated young Scottish Professor of Culdees, who draws a salary of four-hundred odd pounds per annum, and, for forty-nine weeks out of the fifty-two, renders no equivalent of service. Accordingly, he lives in chambers, at Dunstan's Inn, and lounges at seven o'clock in the morning of his thirtieth birthday, against the low stone parapet of Westminster Bridge, nursing a bad attack of vapours, and wondering vaguely whether a chap "who does not know enough to keep sober over-night, should not be thrown like garbage into the river."

What

What more natural than that he should here encounter a young lady "almost tall," with "butter-coloured hair," and treat her to an outfit of silk stockings and a pair of patent-leather boots "of the best Parisian make"? Inevitably, after that, he invites her to breakfast at an Italian ordinary, where she drinks freely of Chianti and Maraschino, and lies to him like fun about her identity and her extraction. "My name is Vestalia Peaussier. My father was a French gentleman—an officer, and a man of position. He died—killed in a duel—when I was very young. . . . My mother was the daughter of a very old Scottish house." And Vestalia has just been turned out of her lodgings for non-payment of rent, and insinuates that she is looking to the streets for a career.

Mossdrop, properly enough shocked at this, hurries her away upon his arm to the British Museum, where he entertains her with his ideas about Nero, Richard Cœur de Lion, King John, the Monkish Chroniclers, and the lions of Assur-Banipal. She listens, with her shoulder against his—"but now he has other auditors as well."

"Excuse me, sir," the urgent and anxious voice of a stranger says close behind him, "but you seem to be extraordinarily well posted indeed on these sculptures here. I hope you will not object to my daughter and me standing where we can hear your remarks."

The stranger is Mr. Skinner, from Paris, Kentucky, U.S.A. His daughter, Adele, is a handsome girl with "coal-black tresses," who looks askance at the "butter-coloured" locks of Vestalia Peaussier.

Skinner persists in his advances. "I should delight, sir, to have my daughter be privileged to profit by your remarks." David speaks somewhat abruptly: "You are certainly welcome, but it

happens that I have finished my remarks, as you call them." Skinner observes, and the reader will agree with him, that "that's too bad;" for David's remarks were lively and instructive. And Skinner, with a view to mutual intellectual improvement, asks David to call upon him at the Savoy Hotel.

Then David and Vestalia lunch together at the Café Royal, drinking a bottle of 34A, cooled to 48. And then they go to Greenwich and eat fish. And at last David conducts her to his chambers, and sends her to bed in the room of his absent neighbour Linkhaw, supposed to be seeking recreation in Uganda, or "maybe in the Hudson Bay Territory." And Linkhaw, inopportune villain, chooses, of course, this night of all nights for playing the god from the machine. Footsteps come echoing up the staircase. A key rattles in Linkhaw's lock. "Stop that, you idiot!" David commands fiercely. "Ah, Davie, Davie, still at the bottle," replies a well known voice from out of the obscurity; and Linkhaw is dragged by Davie into Davie's den.

From the advent of Linkhaw the plot thickens terribly, the Cat's play becomes fast and furious. First of all, Linkhaw isn't Linkhaw, but the Earl of Drumpipes, in the Peerage of Scotland. And secondly, Vestalia isn't Vestalia, but Linkhaw's thoroughly bad lot of a wife, whom he imagines "dead as a mackerel, thank God." And thirdly, she isn't either, but the entirely virtuous niece of Mr. Skinner, who turns out to be a renegade Englishman himself. And Peaussier was only Skinner Gallicised! Then the question rises, Is Mosscrop a gentleman? Drumpipes, with northern caution, admits that he is "a professional man, a person of education." It is certain, anyhow, that Drumpipes would be blithe to make a Countess of Miss Skinner: she is rich, and she is pleasing. Her Popper is in Standard oil. But there are democratic prejudices against his title, though David reminds him
that

that it is "nothing better than a Scottish title," and Drumpipes retorts that the Pilliewillies were great lords in Slug-Angus "before the Campbells were ever heard of, or the Gordons had learned not to eat their cattle raw." Whereupon they almost come to blows about the compensation to be paid for a ruined "moosie." After some persuasion, however, Mossdrop good-naturedly consents to assume his friend's embarrassment, and while Drumpipes, as Linkhaw, makes love to the dark Adele, Mossdrop, as Drumpipes, arranges a coaching-party, a luncheon, and a tableau—whereof he and Vestalia are the central figures. Then the waiter comes in with the tureen; and the Cat's play is ended. *Voilà*, as the French say, *tout*.

March Hares, by George Forth. Who is George Forth? I'll bet half-a-sovereign that "George Forth" is a pseudonym, and that it covers at least two personalities, perhaps three or four. If *March Hares* is not the child of a collaboration, then my eyesight is beginning to fail. Who are the collaborators? Oddly enough, they are quite manifestly members of a group I have never professed to love—they are manifestly pupils of Mr. W. E. Henley. I can only gratefully suppose either that the Master's influence is waning, or that the Publisher's Adviser pruned their manuscript, and the Printer's Reader put the finishing touches to their proofs; for Brutality is absent. I saw it stated in a daily paper, a week or so ago, that George Forth was Mr. Harold Frederic; but that's a rank impossibility. Mr. Harold Frederic has proved that he can cross Bulldogs with Newfoundlands, that he can write able, unreadable *Illuminations* in choice Americanese. He could no more flitter and flutter and coruscate, and turn somersaults in mid-air, and fall lightly on his feet, in the Cat-fashion of George Forth, than he could dance a hornpipe on the point of a needle. It is barely conceivable that Mr. Harold Frederic

Frederic may have been one of the collaborators, but, in that case, I'll eat my wig if the others didn't mightily revise his "copy." *Nenni-da!* George Forth were far more likely to be, in some degree, Mr. George Steevens—late of the *P.M.G.*, much chastened and improved. Perhaps he is also, in some degree, Mr. Marriott Watson? And (*cherchez la femme*) who knows that a lady may not supply an element of his composition? But these are mere conjectures. The long of it is and the short of it is that I'm devoured by curiosity; and I'll offer a bottle of his favourite wine to any fellow who'll provide me with an authentic version of George Forth's "real names."

You will remember, Mr. Editor, the magnificent retort of the French King to the malapert counsellor who ventured to remind him of that silly old Latin saw about *vox populi* and *vox Dei*. With the same splendid and conclusive scorn might you and I dismiss the opinions of the Average Man—especially his opinions about Dogs, Cats, and Books. So long as they remain his own, and are not shared by his superiors, they import as little as the opinions of the Average Dugong. But the tiresome thing is, they are infectious; and his superiors are constantly exposed to the danger of catching them. When he speaks as an individual, the Average Man only bores without convincing you. But when he speaks by the thousand, somehow or other, he is as like as not to set a fashion, or even to establish a tradition. He has already established a tradition about Dogs and Cats; and nowadays he is beginning to set the fashion about Books. Nice people are beginning to accept his opinions upon this, the one subject above all subjects which he is least qualified to touch. I actually know nice people who have read Mr. Conan Doyle! And I have actually met nice people who do not read Mr. Henry James!

And

And that is all the fault of the Average Man. Why can't the dunce be gagged? Mr. James, for instance, has just published a new volume of his incomparable tales. *Embarrassments* 'tis called. Of course, it must be as a volume composed in Coptic for the Average Man; but nice people would find it a casket of inexpressible delights, if only the Average Man could be silenced long enough to let them hear of it. For my part, I do what I can. I remember the example of Martin Luther, and I hurl my ink-pot. But the Devil is still abroad in the world, seeking whom he may devour; and the Average Man will no doubt go on gabbling—the Devil take him!

I have the honour, dear Mr. Editor, to subscribe myself, as ever,

Your obedient Servant,

THE YELLOW DWARF.

An Idyll in Millinery

By M^{énie} Muriel Dowie

I

THE actual reason why Liphook was there does not matter : he was there, and he was there for the second time within a fortnight, and on each occasion, as it happened, he was the only man in the place—the only man-customer in the place. A pale, shaven young Jew passed sometimes about the rooms, in the background.

Liphook could not stand still ; the earliest sign of mental excitement, this ; if he paused for a moment in front of one of the two console tables and glanced into the big mirror, it was only to turn the next second and make a step or two this way or that upon the spacious-sized, vicious-patterned Axminster carpet. His eye wandered, but not without a mark of resolution in its wandering—resolution not to wander persistently in one direction. First the partings in the curtains which ran before the windows seemed to attract him, and he glanced into the gay grove of millinery that blossomed before the hungry eyes of female passers-by in the street. Sometimes he looked through the archways that led upon each hand to further salons in which little groups of women, customers and saleswomen, were collected.

Sometimes

Sometimes his eye rested upon the seven or eight unemployed shop-ladies who stood behind the curtains, like spiders, and looked with an almost malevolent contemptuousness upon the street starers who came not in to buy, but lingered long, and seemed to con the details of attractive models. More than once, a group in either of the rooms fascinated him for full a minute. One particularly, because its component parts declared themselves so quickly to his apprehension.

A young woman, with fringe carefully ordered to complete formlessness and fuzz, who now sat upon a chair and now rose to regard herself in a glass as she poised a confection of the *toque* breed upon her head. With her, a friend, older, of identical type, but less serious mien, whose face pringled into vivacious comment upon each venture ; comment which of course Liphook could not overhear. With them both, an elder lady, to whom the shopwoman, a person of clever *dégagé* manner and primrose hair, principally addressed herself ; appealingly, confirmatively, rapturously, critically—according to her ideas upon the hat in question. In and out of their neighbourhood moved a middle-aged woman of French appearance, short-necked, square-shouldered, high-busted, with a keen face of chamois leather colour and a head to which the black hair seemed to have been permanently glued—Madame Félice herself. When she threw a word into the momentous discussion the eyes of the party turned respectfully upon her ; each woman hearkened. Even Liphook divined that the girl was buying her trousseau millinery ; the older sister, or married friend, advising in crisp, humorous fashion, the elder lady controlling, deciding, voicing the great essential laws of order, obligation and convention ; the shopwoman playing the pipes, the dulcimer, the sackbut, the tabor or the viol—Madame Félice the while commanding with invisible bâton

bâton her intangible orchestra; directing distantly, but with ineludable authority, the very players upon the stage. At this moment She turned to him and his attention necessarily left the group. How did he find this? Did he care for the immense breadth in front? Every one in Paris was doing it. Wasn't he on the whole a little bit sick of hydrangeas—every one, positively every one, had hydrangeas just now, and hydrangeas the size of cauliflowers. He made replies; he assumed a quiet interest, not too strong to be in character; he steered her away from the Parisian breadth in front, away from the hydrangeas, into a consideration of something that rose very originally at the back and had a *ruche* of watercresses to lie upon the hair, and three dahlias, and four distinct colours of tulle in aniline shades, one over the other, and an osprey, and a bird of Paradise, and a few paste ornaments; and a convincing degree of *chic* in its abandoned hideousness. Then he took a turn down the room towards the group aforesaid.

"It looks so *fearfully* married to have that tinsel crown, don't you know!" the elder sister or youthful matron was saying. "I mean, it suggests dull calls, doesn't it? Dull people *always* have tinsel crowns, haven't you noticed? I don't want to influence you, but as I said before, I liked you in the Paris model."

Every hat over which you conspicuously hover at Félise's, becomes, on the instant, a Paris model.

"So smart, Madam," cut in the shop-lady. "And you can't have anything newer than that rustic brim in shot straw with just the little knot of gardenias at the side. Oh I *do* think it suits you!"

Liphook turned away. After all, he didn't want to hear what these poor, silly, feeble people were saying; he wanted to look. . . .

"But

“But Jim always likes me so much in pale blue, that I think ——” began the girl.

“Why not have just a little tiny knot of forget-me nots *with* the gardenia. Oh, I’m shaw you’d like it.”

Thus flowed the oily current of the shop-lady, reaching his ear as Liphook returned down the room. He could look again in the only direction that won his eyes and his thoughts; five minutes had been killed; there was time left him yet, for She had just been seized with the idea that something with a little more brim was really her style. After all, She craved no more than to be loose at Félise’s, amid the Spring models lit by a palely ardent town sun, and Harold’s cheque-book looming in the comfortable shadow of his pocket.

At the back of each gilt and mirrored saloon was placed a work-table—in the manner of all hat-shops—surrounded by chairs in which, mostly with their backs to the shops sat the girls who were making up millinery; their ages anywhere from sixteen to twenty-one. Seldom did the construction of a masterpiece appear to concern them; but they were spangling things; deftly turning loops into bows, curling feathers, binding ospreys into close sheaves; their heads all bent over their work, their neat aprons tied with tape bows at the back, their dull hair half flowing and half coiled—the inimitable manner of the London work girl—their pale faces dimly perceived as they turned and whispered not too noisily: the whole thing recalling the soft, quietly murmurous groups of pigeons in the streets gathered about the scatterings of a cab-horse’s nose-bag. Sometimes shop-girls with elaborately distorted hair came up and gave them disdainful-seeming orders; but the flock of sober little pigeons murmured and pecked at its work and ruffled no plumage of tan-colour or slate. And one of them, different from the others—how Liphook’s eyes, in the brief looks
he

he allowed himself, ate up the details of her guise. Dressed in something—dark-blue, it might have been—that fitted with a difference over her plump little figure; a fine and wide lawn collar spread over breast and shoulders; a smooth head, with no tags and ends upon the pale, yellow-tinted brow; a head as sleek and as sweetly-coloured as the coat of the cupboard-mouse; a face so softly indented by its features, so fleckless, so *mat* in its flat tones, so mignon in its delicate lack of prettiness as to be irresistible. Lips, a dull greyish-pink, but tenderly curved at the pouting bow and faithfully compressed at the dusk-downy corners — terribly conscientious little lips that seemed as if never could they be kissed to lighter humour. Eyes, with pale ash-coloured fringes, neither long nor greatly curved, but so shy-shaped as ever eyes were; eyes that could only be imagined by Liphook, and he was sometimes of mind that they were that vaporous Autumn blue; and at other times that they were liquid, brook-coloured hazel.

But this was the maddest obsession that was riding him! A London workgirl in a West-end hat shop, a girl whose voice he had never heard, near whom he had never, could never, come. And Heaven forbid he should come near her; what did he want with her? Before Heaven, and all these hats and mirrors, Viscount Liphook could have sworn he wanted nothing of her. Yet he loved her completely, desperately, exclusively. What name was there for this feeling other than the name of love? Soiled with all ignoble use, this name of love; though to do him justice, Liphook was not greatly to blame in that matter. He was but little acquainted with the word; he left it out of his *affaires de cœur*, and very properly, for it did not enter into them. Still, his feeling for this girl, his craving for the sound of her voice, his eye fascinated by her smallest movement, his yearning for the sense of her nearer presence—novel, inexplicable as this all was, might it not be love?

He

He stood there ; quiet, inexpressive of face, in jealous hope of—what next ? And then She claimed his attention—in a whisper which brought her head with its mahogany hair, and her face with its ground-rice surface, close to his ear. She said :

“You don’t mind five, eh ? It’s a model—and—don’t you think it becomes me ? I do think this mushroom-coloured velvet and just the three green orchids divine—and it’s really very quiet !”

He assented, careful to look critically at the hat—a clever mass of evilly-imagined, ill-assorted absurdities. He had looked too long at that work-table, at that figure, at that face—he dropped into a chair—let his stick fall between his knees and cast his eyes to the mirror-empanelled ceiling ; there the heads, and feet of the passers-by were seething grotesquely in a fashion that recalled the Inferno of an old engraving.

Well, it would be time to look again soon—ah ! she had risen ; thank goodness, not a tall woman—(She was five foot nine)—small, and indolent of outline.

“I’ll take it to the French milliner now, Madam, and she’ll pin a pink rose in for you to see !”

It was a shop-woman speaking to some customer, who with a hat in her hand, approached the work-table.

“If you please, Mam’zelle Mélanie,” she began, in a voice meant to impress the customer, “would you pin in a rose for Madam to try ? Madam thinks the pansy rather old-looking—” &c., &c., &c.”

The French milliner ; French, then ! And what a dear innocent, young, crusty little face ! what delicious surliness : the little brown bear that she was, growling and grumbling to do a favour. Well, bless that woman—and the pansy that looked old—he knew her name ; enough to recognise her by, enough to address.

a note

a note to her—and it should be a note ! A note that would bring out a star in each grey eye—they were grey—after all. (The grey of a lingering, promising, but unbestowing twilight.) Reflecting, but unobservant, his glance left her face and focussed the pale, fair, young Jew, who was seated, in frock coat and hat, gloating over a pocket-book that had scraps of coloured silk and velvet pinned in it. He recalled his wandering senses.

“How much ? Eight ten ?”

“Well, I’ve taken a little black thing as well ; it happens to be very reasonable. There, you don’t mind ?” Mrs. Percival always went upon the principle of appearing to be careful of other people’s money ; she found she got more of it that way.

“My dear !—as long as you are pleased !” It was weeks since this tone had been possible to him. He scribbled a cheque and they got away.

“I know I’ve been an awful time, old boy,” said the mahogany-haired one, with rough good humour—the good humour of a vain woman whose vanity has been fed. “Are you coming ?”

“Er—no ; in fact, I’m going out of town, I shan’t see you for a bit—Oh, I wasn’t very badly bored, thanks.”

She made no comment on his reply to her question ; her coarsely pretty face hardly showed lines of relief, for it was not a mobile face ; but she was pleased.

“Glad you didn’t fret. I’d never dreamt you’d be so good about shopping. Yes, I’ll take a cab. There is a call for 12.30, and I see it is nearly one now.”

He put her into a nice-looking hansom, lifted his hat and watched her drive away. Then he turned and looked into the gaudy windows. His feelings were his own somehow, now that She had left him. He smiled ; love warmed in him. Was the old pansy gone and the pink rose in its place ? Had she pricked those

those creamy yellow fingers in the doing of it? No, she was too deft. Tired, flaccid little fingers! Was he never to think of anything or anyone again, except Mam'zelle Mélanie?

II

Now the mahogany-haired lady was not an actress: she was nothing so common as an actress; she belonged to a mysterious class, but little understood, even if clearly realised, by the public. It was not because she could not that she did not act; she had never tried to, there had been no question of capability—but she consented to appear at a famous West-end burlesque theatre, to oblige the manager who was a personal friend of long-standing. She “went on” in the ball-room scene of a hoary but ever-popular “musical comedy,” because there was—not a part—but a pretty gown to be filled, and because she was surprisingly handsome, and of very fine figure, and filled that gown amazingly well. The two guineas a week that came her way at “Treasury” went a certain distance in gloves and cab-fares, and the necessities of life she had a different means of supplying. Let her position be understood: she was a very respectable person: there are degrees in respectability as in other things; there was no fear of vulgar unpleasantnesses with her and her admirers—if she had them. Mr. John Holditch, the popular manager of several theatres had a real regard for her; in private she called him “Jock, old boy,” and he called her “Mill”—because he recollected her *début*; but the public knew her as Miss Mildred Metcalf, and her lady comrades in the dressing-room as Mrs. Percival, and it was generally admitted by all concerned that she was equally satisfactory under any of these styles. Oh, it will have been
noticed

noticed and need not be insisted on, that Liphook called her "*my dear,*" and if it be not pushing the thing too far, I may add that her mother spoke of her as "*our Florrie.*"

Liphook was a rich man whose occupation, when he was in town, was the dividing of days between the club, his rooms in Half Moon Street, his mother's house in Belgrave Square, and Mrs. Percival's abode in Manfield Gardens, Kensington. The only respect in which he differed from a thousand men of his class was, that he had visited the hat shop of Madame Félise, in the company of Mrs. Percival, and had conceived a genuine passion for a little French milliner who sewed spangles on to snippets of nothingness at a table in the back of the shop.

The note had been written, had been answered. This answer, in fine, sloping, uneducated French handwriting, upon thin, lined, pink paper of the foreign character, had given Liphook a ridiculous amount of pleasure. The club waiters, his mother's butler, his man in Half Moon Street, these unimportant people chiefly noted the uncontrollable bubbles of happiness that floated to the surface of his impassive English face during the days that followed the arrival of that answer. He didn't think anything in particular about it ; few men so open to the attractions of women as this incident proves him, think anything in particular at all, least of all, at so early a stage. He was not—for the sake of his judges it must be urged—meaning badly any more than he was definitely meaning well. He wasn't meaning at all. He cannot be blamed, either. The world is responsible for this sense of irresponsibility in men of the world—who are the world's sole making. Herein he was true to type ; in so far as he did not think what the girl meant by her answer, type was supported by individual character. Liphook was not clever, and did not think much or with any success, on any subject. And if he had he
wouldn't

wouldn't have hit the real reason ; only experience would have told him that a French workgirl, from a love of pleasure and the national measure of shrewd practicality combined, never refuses the chance of a nice outing. She does not, like her English sister, drag her virtue into the question at all.

Never in his life, so it chanced, had Liphook gone forth to an interview in such a frame of mind as on the day he was to meet M^{élanie} outside the Argyll Baths in Great Marlboro' Street at ten minutes past seven. Apart from the intoxicating perfume that London seemed to breathe for him, and the gold motes that danced in the dull air, there was the unmistakable resistant pressure of the pavement against his feet (thus it seemed) which is seldom experienced twice in a lifetime ; in the lifetime of such a man as Liphook, usually never. The Argyll Baths, Great Marlboro' Street : what a curious place for the child to have chosen, and she would be standing there, pretending to look into a shop window. Oh, of course, there were no shop windows to speak of in Great Marlboro' Street. (He had paced its whole length several times since the arrival of the pink glazed note). What would she say ? What would she look like ? Her eyes, drooped or raised frankly to his, for instance ? That she would not greet him with bold, meaning smile and common phrase he knew—he felt. Dreaming and speculating, but wearing the calm leisured air of a gentleman walking from one point to another, he approached and—yes ! there she was ! A scoop-shaped hat rose above the cream-yellow brow ; a big dotted veil was loosely—was wonderfully—bound about it ; a little black cape covered the demure lawn collar ; quite French *bottines* peeped below the dark-blue skirt. But—she was not alone, a man was with her. A man whom, even at some distance, he could discern to be unwelcome and unexpected, the pale fair young Jew
in

in dapper frock-coat and extravagantly curved over-shiny hat. Loathsome-looking reptile he was, too, so thought Liphook as he turned abruptly with savage scrape of his veering foot upon the pavement, up Argyll Street. Perhaps she was getting rid of him; it was only nine minutes past seven, anyhow; perhaps he would be gone in a moment. Odious beast! In love with her, no doubt; how came it he had the wit to recognise her indescribable charm? (Liphook never paused to wonder how himself had recognised it, though this was, in the circumstances, even more remarkable). Anyway, judging by that look he remembered, she would not be unequal to rebuffing unwelcome attention.

Liphook walked as far as Hengler's Circus and read the bills; the place was in occupation, it being early in March. He studied the bill from top to bottom, then he turned slowly and retraced his steps to the corner. Joy! she was there and alone. His pace quickened, his heart rose; his face, a handsome face, was strung to lines of pride, of passionate anticipation.

He had greeted her; he had heard her voice; so soft—dear Heaven! so soft—in reply; they had turned and were walking towards Soho, and he knew no word of what had passed.

“We will have a cab; you will give me the pleasure of dining with me. I have arranged it. Allow me.” Perhaps these were the first coherent words that he said. Then they drove along and he said inevitable, valueless things in quick order, conscious of the lovely interludes when her smooth tones, now wood-sweet, now with a harp-like thrilling *timbre* in them, again with the viol—or was it the lute-note?—a sharp dulcidity that made answer in him as certainly as the tuning-fork compels its octave from the rosewood board. The folds of the blue gown fell beside him; the French pointed feet, miraculously short-toed, rested on the atrocious straw mat of the wretched hansom his blindness had brought him; the
scoop-hat

scoop-hat knocked the wicked reeking lamp in the centre of the cab ; the dotted veil, tied as only a French hand can tie a veil, made more delectable the creams and twine-shades of the monotonous-coloured kitten face. They drove, they arrived somewhere, they dined, and then of all things, they went into a church, which being open and permitting organ music to exude from its smut-blackened walls, seemed less like London than any place they might have sought.

And it happened to be a Catholic Church, and he—yes, he actually followed the pretty ways of her, near the grease-smeared pecten shell with its holy water, that stuck from a pillar : some Church oyster not uprooted from its ancient bed. And they sat on *prie-dieus*, in the dim incense-savoured gloom ; little un-aspiring lights seemed to be burning in dim places beyond ; and sometimes there were voices, and sometimes these ceased again and music filled the dream-swept world in which Liphook was wrapped and veiled away. And they talked—at least she talked, low murmurous recital about herself and her life, and every detail sunk and expanded wondrously in the hot-bed of Liphook's abnormally affected mind. The evening passed to night, and people stepped about, and doors closed with a hollow warning sound that hinted at the end of lovely things, and they went out and he left her at a door which was the back entrance to Madame Félise's establishment ; but he had rolled back a grey lisle-thread glove, and gathered an inexpressibly precious memory from the touch of that small hand that posed roses instead of pansies all the day.

And of course he was to see her again. He had heard all about her. How a year since she had been fetched from Paris at the instance of Goldenmuth. Goldenmuth was the fair young Jewish man in the frock-coat and supremely curved hat. He was

a "relative" of Madame Félice, and travelled for her, in a certain sense, in Paris. He had seen Mélanie in an obscure corner of the *Petit St. Thomas* when paying an airy visit to a lady in charge of some department there. An idea had occurred to him ; in three days he arrived and made a proposition. He had conceived the plan of transplanting this ideally French work-flower to the London shop, and his plan had been a success. Her simple, shrewd, much-defined little character clung to Mélanie in London, as in Paris ; she had clever fingers, but beyond all, her appearance which Goldenmuth had the art to appreciate, soft but marked and unassailable by influence, told infinitely at that unobtrusive but conspicuous work-table.

Half mouse, half dove ; never to be vulgarised, never to be destroyed.

Mélanie had a family, worthy *épiciér* of Nantes, her father ; her mother, his invaluable book-keeper. Her sister Hortense, cashier at the Restaurant des Trois Epées ; her sister Albertine, in the millinery like herself. Every detail delighted Liphook, every word of her rapid incorrect London English sank into his mind ; in the extraordinarily narrow circumscribed life that Liphook had lived—that all the Liphooks of the world usually do live—a little, naïvely-simple description of some quite different life is apt to sound surprisingly interesting, and if it comes from the lips of your Mélanie, why

But previous to the glazed pink note, if Liphook had crystallised any floating ideas he might have had as to the nature of the intimacy he expected, they would have tallied in no particular with the reality. In his first letter had been certain warmly-worded sentences ; at their first interview when he had interred two kisses below the lisle-thread glove, he had incoherently murmured something lover-like. It had been too dark to

see M^{élanie}'s face at the moment ; but when since, more than once, he had attempted similar avowals she had put her head on one side, raised her face, crinkled up the corners of the grey eyes, and twisted quite alarmingly the lilac-pink lips. So there wasn't much said about love or any such thing. After all, he could see her three or four times a week ; on Sunday they often spent the whole day together ; he could listen to her prattle ; he was a silent fellow himself, having never learnt to talk and having nothing to talk about ; he could, in hansoms and quiet places, tuck her hand within his arm and beam affectionately into her face, and they grew always closer and closer to each other ; as *camarades*, still only as *camarades*. She never spoke of Goldenmuth except incidentally, and then very briefly ; and Liphook, who had since seen the man with her in the street on two occasions, felt very unanxious to introduce the subject ; after all he knew more than he wanted to about it, he said to himself. It was obvious enough. He had bought her two hats at F^élise's ; he had begged to do as much, and she had advised him which he should purchase, and on evenings together she had looked ravishing beneath them. He knew many secrets of the hat trade ; he knew and delightedly laughed over half a hundred fictions M^{élanie} exploded ; he was in a fair way to become a man-milliner ; even Goldenmuth could not have talked more trippingly of the concomitants of capotes.

One Sunday, when the sunniest of days had tempted them down the river, he came suddenly into the private room where they were to lunch and found her coquetting with her veil in front of a big ugly mirror ; a mad sort of impulse took him, he gripped her arms to her side, nipped her easily off the floor, bent his head round the prickly fence of hat-brim and kissed her several times ; she laughed with the low, fluent gurgle of water pushing through a narrow passage. She said nothing, she only laughed.

Somehow,

Somehow, it disorganised Liphook.

"Do you love me? Do you love me?" he asked rapidly, even roughly, in the only voice he could command, and he shook her a little.

She put her head on one side and made that same sweet crinkled-up kind of *moue moquante*, then she spread her palms out and shook them and laughed and ran away round the table. "Est-ce que je sais, moi?" she cried in French. Liphook didn't speak. Oh, he understood her all right, but he was getting himself a little in hand first. A man like Liphook has none of the art of life; he can't do figure-skating among his emotions like your nervous, artistic-minded, intellectually trained man. After that one outburst and the puzzlement that succeeded it, he was silent, until he remarked upon the waiter's slowness in bringing up luncheon. But he had one thing quite clear in his thick English head, through which the blood was still whizzing and singing. He wanted to kiss her again badly; he was going to kiss her again at the first opportunity.

But, of course, when he wasn't with her his mind varied in its reflections. For instance, he had come home one night from dining at Aldershot—a farewell dinner to his Colonel it was—and he had actually caught himself saying: "I must get out of it," meaning his affair with Mélanie. That was pretty early on, when it had still seemed, particularly after being in the society of worldly-wise friends who rarely, if ever, did anything foolish, much less emotional, that he was making an ass of himself, or was likely to if he didn't "get out of it." Now the thing had assumed a different aspect. He could not give her up; under no circumstances could he contemplate giving her up; well then, why give her up? She was only a little thing in a hat shop, she would do very much better—yes, but, somehow he had a certain
feeling

feeling about her, he couldn't—well, in point of fact, he loved her ; hang it, he respected her ; he'd sooner be kicked out of his Club than say one word to her that he'd mind a fellow saying to his sister.

Thus the Liphook of March, '95, argued with the Liphook of the past two and thirty years !

III

Liphook's position was awkward—all the other Liphooks in the world have said it was beastly awkward, supposing they could have been made to understand it. To many another kind of man this little love story might not have been inappropriate ; occurring in the case of Liphook it was nothing less than melancholy. Not that he felt melancholy about it, no indeed ; just sometimes, when he happened to think how it was all going to end, he had rather a bad moment, but thanks to his nature and training he did not think often.

Meantime, he had sent a diamond heart to Mrs. Percival ; there was more sentiment about a heart than a horse-shoe ; women looked at that kind of thing, and she would feel that he wasn't cooling off ; so it had been a heart. That secured him several more weeks of freedom at any rate, and he wouldn't have the trouble of putting notes in the fire. For on receiving the diamond heart Mrs. Percival behaved like a python after swallowing an antelope ; she was torpid in satiety, and no sign came from her.

But one morning Liphook got home to Half Moon Street after his Turkish bath, and heard that a gentleman was waiting to see him.

"At least, hardly a gentleman, my lord ; I didn't put him in the library," explained the intuitive Sims.

Some

Some one from his tailor's with so-called "new" patterns, no doubt ; well——

He walked straight into the room, never thinking, and he saw Goldenmuth. The man had an offensive orchid in his buttonhole. To say that Liphook was surprised is nothing ; he was astounded, and too angry to call up any expression whatever to his face ; he was rigid with rage. What in hell had Sims let the fellow in for ? However, this was the last of Sims ; Sims would go.

The oily little brute, with his odious hat in his hand, was speaking ; was saying something about being fortunate in finding his lordship, &c.

"Be good enough to tell me your business with me," said Liphook, with undisguised savagery. Though he had asked him to speak, he thought that when her name was mentioned he would have to choke him. His rival—by gad, this little Jew beggar was Liphook's rival. Goldenmuth hitched his sallow neck, as leathery as a turtle's, in his high, burnished collar, and took his pocket-book from his breast pocket—which meant that he was nervous, and forgot that he was not calling upon a "wholesale buyer," to whom he would presently show a pattern. He pressed the book in both hands, and swayed forward on his toes—swayed into hurried speech.

"Being interested in a young lady whom your lordship has honoured with your attentions lately, I called to 'ave a little talk." The man had an indescribable accent, a detestable fluency, a smile which nearly warranted you in poisoning him, a manner——! There was silence. Liphook waited ; the snap with which he bit off four tough orange-coloured hairs from his moustache, sounded to him like the stroke of a hammer in the street. Then an idea struck him. He put a question :

"What has it got to do with you ? "

"I am

"I am interested——"

"So am I. But I fail to see why you should mix yourself up with my affairs."

"Madame Félise feels——"

"What's she got to do with it?" Liphook tossed out his remarks with the nakedest brutality.

"The lady is in her employment and——"

"Look here ; say what you've got to say, or go," burst from Liphook, with the rough bark of passion. He had his hands behind his back ; he was holding one with the other in the fear that they might get away from him, as it were. His face was still immobile, but the crooks of two veins between the temples and the eye corners stood up upon the skin ; his impassive blue eyes harboured sullen hatred. He saw the whole thing. That old woman had sent her dirty messenger to corner him, to "ask his intentions," to get him to give himself away, to make some promise. It was a kind of blackmail they had in view. The very idea of such creatures about M^élanie would have made him sick at another time ; now he felt only disgust, and the rising obstinacy about committing himself at the unsavory instance of Goldenmuth. After all, they couldn't take M^élanie from him ; she was free, she could go into another shop ; he could marry Stop—madness !

"Mademoiselle M^élanie is admitted to be most attractive—others have observed it——"

"You mean you have," sneered Liphook ; in the most ungentlemanly manner, it must be allowed.

"I must bring to the notice of your lordship," said the Jew, with the deference of a man who knows he is getting his point, "that so young as Mademoiselle is, and so innocent, she is not fitted to understand business questions ; and her parents being at a distance

a distance it falls to Madame Félice and myself to see that—excuse me, my lord, but we know what London is!—that her youth is not misled.”

“Who’s misleading her youth?” Liphook burst out; and his schoolboy language detracted nothing from the energy with which he spoke. “You can take my word here and now that she is in every respect as innocent as I found her. And now,” with a sudden reining in of his voice, “we have had enough of this talk. If you are the lady’s guardians you may reassure yourselves: I am no more to her than a friend: I have not sought to be any more.” Liphook moved in conclusion of the interview.

“Your lordship is very obliging; but I must point out that a young and ardent girl is likely, in the warmth of her affection, to be precipitate—that we would protect her from herself.”

“About this I have nothing to say, and will hear nothing,” exclaimed Liphook, hurriedly.

Goldenmuth used the national gesture; he bent his right elbow, turned his right hand palm upwards and shook it softly to and fro.

“Perhaps even I have noticed it. I am not insensible!”

Liphook had never heard a famous passage—he neither read nor looked at Shakespeare, so this remark merely incensed him. “But,” went on the Jew, “since she came to England—for I brought her—I have made myself her protector——”

“You’re a liar!” said Liphook, who was a very literal person.

“Oh, my lord!—I mean in the sense of being kind to her and looking after her, with Madame Félice’s entire approval; so when I noticed the marked attentions of a gentleman like your lordship——”

“You’re jealous,” put in Liphook, again quite inexcusably. But it would be impossible to over-estimate his contempt for this
man.

man. Belonging to the uneducated section of the upper class he was a man of the toughest prejudices on some points. One of these was that all Jews were mean, scurvy devils at bottom and that no kind of consideration need be shown them. Avoid them as you would a serpent; when you meet them, crush them as you would a serpent. He'd never put it into words; but that is actually what poor Liphook thought, or at any rate it was the dim idea on which he acted.

"Your lordship is making a mistake," said Goldenmuth with a flush. "I am not here in my own interest; I am here to act on behalf of the young lady." Had the heavens fallen? In *her* interest? Then M^élanie? Never! As if a Thing like this could speak the truth!

"Who sent you?" Liphook always went to the point.

"Madame F^élise and I talked it over and agreed that I should make it convenient to call. We have both a great regard for Mademoiselle; we feel a responsibility—a responsibility to her parents."

What ~~was~~ all this about? Liphook was too bewildered to interrupt even.

"Naturally, we should like to see Mademoiselle in a position, an assured position for which she is every way suited."

So it was as he thought. They wanted to rush a proposal. *Must* he chaffer with them at all?

"I can tell you that if I had anything to propose I should write it to the lady herself," he said.

"We are not anxious to come between you. I may say I have enquired—my interest in Mademoiselle has led me to enquire—and Madame F^élise and I think it would be in every way a suitable connection for her. Your lordship must feel that we regard her as no common girl; she deserves to be *lancée* in the
right

right manner ; a settlement—an establishment—some indication that the connection will be fairly permanent, or if not, that suitable——”

“Is *that* what you are driving at, you dog, you?” cried Liphook, illuminated at length and boiling with passion. “So you want to sell her to me and take your blasted commission? Get out of my house!” He grew suddenly quiet; it was an ominous change. “Get out, this instant, before ——”

Goldenmuth was gone, the street door banged.

“God! God!” breathed Liphook with his hand to his wet brow, “what a hellish business!”

* * * * *

It was nine o'clock when Liphook came in that night. He did not know where he had been, he believed he had had something in the nature of dinner, but he could not have said exactly where he had had it.

Sims handed him a note.

He recognised a friend's hand and read the four lines it contained.

“When did Captain Throgmorton come, then?”

“Came in about three to 'alf past, my lord; he asked me if your lordship had any engagement to-night, and said he would wait at the Club till quarter past eight and that he should dine at the Blue Posts after that.”

“I see; well,” he reflected a moment, “Sims, pack my hunting things, have everything at St. Pancras in time for the ten o'clock express, and,” he reflected again, “Sims, I want you to take a note—no, never mind. That'll do.”

“V'ry good, my lord.”

Yes, he'd go. Jack Throgmorton was the most companionable man in the world—he was so silent. Liphook and he had been

at

at Sandhurst together, they had joined the same regiment. Liphook had sent in his papers rather than stand the fag of India; Throgmorton had "taken his twelve hundred" rather than stand the fag of anywhere. He was a big heavy fellow with a marked difficulty in breathing, also there was fifteen stone of him. His round eyes, like "bulls'-eyes," the village children's best-loved goodies, stuck out of a face rased to an even red resentment. He had the hounds somewhere in Bedfordshire. His friends liked him enormously, so did his enemies. To say that he was stupid does not touch the fringe of a description of him. He had never had a thought of his own, nor an idea; all the same, in any Club quarrel, or in regard to a point of procedure, his was an opinion other men would willingly stand by. At this moment in his life, a blind instinct taught Liphook to seek such society; no one could be said to sum up more completely—perhaps because so unconsciously—the outlook of Liphook's world, which of late he had positively begun to forget. The thing was bred into Throgmorton by sheer, persistent sticking to the strain, and it came out of him again mechanically, automatically, distilled through his dim brain a triple essence. The kind of man clever people have found it quite useless to run down, for it has been proved again and again that if he can only be propped up in the right place at the right moment, you'll never find his equal *in* that place. Altogether, a handsome share in "the secret of England's greatness" belongs to him. The two men met on the platform beside a pile of kit-bags and suit cases, all with Viscount Liphook's name upon them in careful uniformity. Sims might have had the administration of an empire's affairs upon his mind, whereas he was merely chaperoning more boots and shirts than any one man has a right to possess.

"You didn't come last night," said Captain Throgmorton, as though

though he had only just realised the fact. He prefaced the remark by his favourite ejaculation which was "Harr-rr"—he prefaced every remark with "Harr-rr"—on a cold day it was not uninspiring if accompanied by a sharp stroke of the palms; in April it was felt to be somewhat out of season. But Captain Throgmorton merely used it as a means of getting his breath and his voice under way. "Pity," he went on, without noticing Liphook's silence; "good bone." This summed up the dinner with its famous marrow-bones, at the Blue Posts.

They got in. Each opened a *Morning Post*. Over the top of this fascinating sheet they flung friendly brevities from time to time.

"Shan't have more than a couple more days to rattle 'em about," Captain Throgmorton remarked, after half an hour's silence, and a glance at the flying hedges.

Liphook began to come back into his world. After all it was a comfortable world. Yet had an angel for a time transfigured it, ah dear! how soft that angel's wings, if he might be folded within them . . . old world, dear, bad old world, you might roll by.

They were coming home from hunting next day. Each man bent ungainly in his saddle; their cords were splashed; the going had been heavy, and once it had been hot as well, but only for a while. Then they had hung about a lot, and though they found three times, they hadn't killed. Liphook was weary. When Throgmorton stuck his crop under his thigh, hung his reins on it, and lit a cigar, Liphook was looking up at the sky, where dolorous clouds of solid purple splotched a background of orange, flame-colour and rose. Throgmorton's peppermint eye rolled slowly round when it left his cigar-tip; he knew that when a man—that is, a man of Liphook's sort—is found staring at a thing like the sunset there is a screw loose somewhere.

"Wha'

"Wha' is it, Harold?" he said, on one side of his cigar.

Liphook made frank answer.

"What's she done then?"

"Oh, Lord, it isn't *her*."

"'Nother?" said Jack, without any show of surprise, and got his answer again.

"What sort?" This was very difficult, but Liphook shut his eyes and flew it.

"How old?"

"Twenty," said Liphook, and felt a rapture rising.

"Jack, man," he exclaimed, under the influence of the flame and rose, no doubt, "what if I were to marry?"

Throgmorton was not, as has been indicated, a person of fine fibre. "Do, and be done with 'em," said he. And after all, as far as it went, it was sound enough advice.

"I mean marry her," Liphook explained, and the explanation cost him a considerable expenditure of pluck.

An emotional man would have fallen off his horse—if the horse would have let him. Jack's horse never would have let him. Jack said nothing for a moment; his eye merely seemed to swell; then he put another question:

"Earl know about it?"

"By George, I should say not!"

"Harr-rr."

That meant that the point would be resolved in the curiously composed brain of Captain Throgmorton, and by common consent not another word was said on the matter.

IV

Two days had gone by. Liphook's comfortable sense of having acted wisely in coming out of town to think the thing over still supported him, ridiculous though it seems. For of course he was no more able to think anything over than a Hottentot. Thinking is not a natural process at all; savage men never knew of it, and many people think it quite as dangerous as it is unnatural. It has become fashionable to learn thinking, and some forms of education undertake to teach it; but Liphook had never gone through those forms of education. After all, to understand Liphook, one must admit that he approximated quite as nearly to the savage as to the civilised and thinking man, if not more nearly. His appetites and his habits were mainly savage, and had he lived in savage times he would not have been touched by a kind of love for which he was never intended, and his trouble would not have existed. However, he was as he was, and he was thinking things over; that is, he was waiting and listening for the most forceful of his instincts to make itself heard, and he had crept like a dumb unreasoning animal into the burrow of his kind, making one last effort to be of them. At the end of the week his loudest instinct was setting up a roar; there could be no mistaking it. He loved her. He could not part from her; he must get back to her; he must make her his and carry her off.

"Sorry to be leaving you, Jack," he said one morning at the end of the week. They were standing looking out of the hall door together and it was raining. "But I find I must go up this morning."

Throgmorton rolled a glance at him, then armed him into the library and shut the door.

"What

"What are you going to do?"

"Marry her."

There was a silence. They stood there, the closest feeling of friendship between them, not saying a word.

"My dear Harold," said Throgmorton at length, with much visible and more invisible effort; he put a hand heavily on Liphook's shoulder and blew hard in his mute emotion. Then he put his other hand on Liphook's other shoulder. Liphook kept his eyes down; he was richly conscious of all Jack was mutely saying; he felt the weight of every unspoken argument; the moment was a long one, but for both these slow-moving minds a very crowded moment.

"Come to the Big Horn Mountains with me," Throgmorton remarked suddenly, "——and——har-rr write to her from there."

He was proud of this suggestion; he knew the value of a really remote point to write from. It was always one of the first things to give your mind to, the choice of a geographically well-nigh inaccessible point to write from. First you found it, then you went to it, and when you got there, by Jove, you didn't need to write at all. Liphook smiled in impartial recognition of his friend's wisdom, but shook his head.

"Thanks," he said. "I've thought it all over"—he genuinely believed he had—"and I'm going to marry her. Jack, old man, I love her like the very devil!"

In spite of the grotesqueness of the phrase, the spirit in it was worth having.

Throgmorton's hands came slowly off his friend's shoulders. He walked to the window, took out a very big handkerchief and dried his head. He seemed to look out at the dull rain battering on the gravel and digging yellow holes.

"I'll

"I'll drive you to meet the 11.15," he said at last and went out of the room.

Liphook put up his arms and drew a deep breath ; it had been a stiff engagement. He felt tired. But no, not tired. Roll by, O bad old world—he has chosen the angel's wing !

Not one word had passed about Goldenmuth, Madame Félice, or the astounding interview ; a man like Liphook can always hold his tongue ; one of his greatest virtues. Besides, why should he ever think or breathe the names of those wretches again ? Jack Throgmorton, in his splendid ignorance, would have been unable to throw light upon the real motive of these simple, practical French people. Liphook to his dying day would believe they had given proof of hideous iniquity, while in reality they were actuated by a very general belief of the *bourgeoise*, that to be "established," with settlements, as the mistress of a viscount, is quite as good as becoming the wife of a grocer. They had been, perhaps, wicked, but innocently wicked ; for they acted according to their belief, in the girl's best interest. Unfortunately they had had an impracticable Anglais to deal with and had had to submit to insult ; in their first encounter, they had been worsted by British brute stupidity.

With a constant dull seething of impulses that quite possessed him, he got through the time that had to elapse before he could hear from her in reply to his short letter. He had done with thinking. A chance meeting with his father on the sunny side of Pall Mall one morning did not even disquiet him. His every faculty, every fibre was in thrall to his great passion. The rest of life seemed minute, unimportant, fatuous, a mass of trivial futilities.

There were two things in the world, and two only. There was Mélanie, and there was love. Ah, yes, and there was time !

Why

Why did she not answer ?

A note from the bonnet-shop, re-enclosing his own, offered an explanation that entered like a frozen knife-blade into Liphook's heart. She had left. She was gone. Gone altogether, for good.

Absurd ! Did they suppose they could—oh, a higher price was what they wanted. He'd go ; by God he'd give it. Was he not going to marry her ? He hurried to the hat-shop ; he dropped into the chair he had occupied when last in the shop, let his stick fall between his knees and stared before him into the mirrored walls. All the same tangled scene of passing people, customers, shop-women and brilliant millinery was reflected in them ; only the bright hats islanded and steady among this ugly fluctuation. Pools of fretful life, these circular mirrors ; garish, discomfiting to gaze at ; stirred surely by no angel unless the reflection of the mouse-maiden should ever cross their surfaces.

Fifteen minutes later he was standing gazing at the horrid clock and ornaments in ormolu that stood on the mantel-piece of the red velvet salon where he waited for Madame Félise.

She came. Her bow was admirable.

"I wrote to Mademoiselle, and my letter has been returned. The note says she has gone." Liphook's schoolboy bluntness came out most when he was angry. "Where has she gone ? And why ?"

"Aha ! Little Mademoiselle ! Yes, indeed, she has left us and how sorry we are ! *Chère petite !* But what could we do ? We would have kept her, but her parents——" A shrug and a smile punctuated the sentence.

"What about her parents ?"

"They had arranged for her an alliance—what would you have ?—we had to let her go. And the responsibility—after all——"

"What sort of an alliance?" The dog-like note was in his voice again.

"But—an alliance! I believe very good; a *charpentier*—a *charcutier*, I forget—but *bien solide*!"

"Do you mean you have sold her to some French——"

"Ah, my lord! how can you speak such things? Her parents are most respectable, she has always been most respectable—naturally we had more than once felt anxious here in London——"

"I wish to marry her," said Liphook curtly, and he said it still, though he believed her to have been thrust upon a less reputable road. It was his last, his greatest triumph over his world. It fitted him nobly for the shelter of the angel's wing. He had learned the worst—and——

"I wish to marry her," said Liphook.

"Hélas!—but she is married!" shrieked Madame Félice in a mock agony of regret, but with surprise twinkling in her little black eyes.

"Married!" shouted Liphook. "Impossible!"

"Ask Mr. Goldenmuth, he was at the wedding." Madame laughed; the true explanation of my lord's remarkable statement had just struck her. It was a *ruse*; an English *ruse*. She laughed very much, and it sounded and looked most unpleasant.

"His lordship was—a *little* unfriendly—a *little* too—too reserved—not to tell us, not even to tell Mademoiselle herself that he desired to *marry* her," she said with villainous archness.

Liphook strode to the door. Yes, why, why had he not?

"I will find her; I know where her relatives live. "If it is a lie—I'll make you sorry——"

"*Fi donc*, what a word! The ceremony at the *Mairie* was on Thursday last."

They

They were going downstairs and had to pass through the showrooms—quite near—ah, quite near—the table where the little grey and brown pigeons sat clustered, where the one ring-dove had sat too.

“It is sometimes the fate of a lover who thinks too long,” Madame was saying, with an air of much philosophy. “But see now, if my lord would care to send a little souvenir”—Madame reached hastily to a model on a stand—“*comme cadeau de nocce* here is something quite *exquis!*” She kissed the tips of her brown fingers—inimitably, it must be allowed. “So simple, so young, so innocent—I could pose a little *næud of myosotis*. Coming from my lord, it would be so delicate!”

Liphook was in a shop. There were people about. He was a lover, he was a fool, he was a gentleman.

“Er—thank you—not to-day,” he said; the air of the world he had repudiated came back to him. And a man like Liphook doesn’t let you see when he is hit. That is the beauty of him. He knew it was true, but he would go to Paris; yes, though he knew it was true. He would not, could not see her. But he would go.

He stood a moment in the sun outside the shop, its windows like gardens behind him; its shop-ladies like evil-eyed reptiles in these gardens. The carpets, the mirrors on the wall, the tables at the back—and it was here he had first seen the tip and heard the flutter of an angel’s wing!

“Lord Liphook,” said a voice, “what an age”

He turned and lifted his hat.

His world had claimed him.

D'Outre tombe

By Rosamund Marriott-Watson

BESIDE my grave, if chance should ever bring you,
You, peradventure, on some dim Spring day,
What song of welcome could my blackbird sing you,
As once in May ?

As once in May, when all the birds were calling,
Calling and crying through the soft Spring rain,
As once in Autumn with the dead leaves falling
In wood and lane.

I, in my grave, and you, above, remember—
And yet between us what is there to say ?—
In Death's disseverance, wider than December
Disparts from May.

I with the dead, and you among the living,
In separate camps we sojourn, unallied ;
Life is unkind and Death is unforgiving,
And both divide.

Babies and Brambles

By Katharine Cameron



The Invisible Prince

By Henry Harland

AT a masked ball given by the Countess Wohenhoffen, in Vienna, during carnival week, a year ago, a man draped in the embroidered silks of a Chinese mandarin, his features entirely concealed by an enormous Chinese head in cardboard, was standing in the Wintergarten, the big, dimly lighted conservatory, near the door of one of the gilt-and-white reception rooms, rather a stolid-seeming witness of the multi-coloured romp within, when a voice behind him said, "How do you do, Mr. Field?"—a woman's voice, an English voice.

The mandarin turned round.

From a black mask, a pair of blue-grey eyes looked into his broad, bland Chinese visage; and a black domino dropped him an extravagant little courtesy.

"How do you do?" he responded. "I'm afraid I'm not Mr. Field; but I'll gladly pretend I am, if you'll stop and talk with me. I was dying for a little human conversation."

"Oh, you're afraid you're not Mr. Field, are you?" the mask replied derisively. "Then why did you turn when I called his name?"

"You mustn't hope to disconcert me with questions like that," said he. "I turned because I liked your voice."

He

He might quite reasonably have liked her voice, a delicate, clear, soft voice, somewhat high in register, with an accent, crisp, chiselled, concise, that suggested wit as well as distinction. She was rather tall, for a woman; one could divine her slender and graceful, under the voluminous folds of her domino.

She moved a little away from the door, deeper into the conservatory. The mandarin kept beside her. There, amongst the palms, a *fontaine lumineuse* was playing, rhythmically changing colour. Now it was a shower of rubies; now of emeralds or amethysts, of sapphires, topazes, or opals.

"How pretty," she said, "and how frightfully ingenious. I am wondering whether this wouldn't be a good place to sit down. What do *you* think?" And she pointed with her fan to a rustic bench.

"I think it would be no more than fair to give it a trial," he assented.

So they sat down on the rustic bench, by the *fontaine lumineuse*.

"In view of your fear that you're not Mr. Field, it's rather a coincidence that at a masked ball in Vienna you should just happen to be English, isn't it?" she asked.

"Oh, everybody's more or less English, in these days, you know," said he.

"There's some truth in that," she admitted, with a laugh. "What a diverting piece of artifice this Wintergarten is, to be sure. Fancy arranging the electric lights to shine through a dome of purple glass, and look like stars. They do look like stars, don't they? Slightly over-dressed, showy stars, indeed; stars in the German taste; but stars, all the same. Then, by day, you know, the purple glass is removed, and you get the sun—the real sun. Do you notice the delicious fragrance of lilac? If one
hadn't

hadn't too exacting an imagination, one might almost persuade oneself that one was in a proper open-air garden, on a night in May. . . . Yes, everybody is more or less English, in these days. That's precisely the sort of thing I should have expected Victor Field to say."

"By-the-bye," questioned the mandarin, "if you don't mind increasing my stores of knowledge, who *is* this fellow Field?"

"This fellow Field? Ah, who indeed?" said she. "That's just what I wish you'd tell me."

"I'll tell you with pleasure, after you've supplied me with the necessary data."

"Well, by some accounts, he's a little literary man in London."

"Oh, come! You never imagined that I was a little literary man in London."

"You might be worse. However, if the phrase offends you, I'll say a rising young literary man, instead. He writes things, you know."

"Poor chap, does he? But then, that's a way they have, rising young literary persons?"

"Doubtless. Poems and stories and things. And book reviews, I suspect. And even, perhaps, leading articles in the newspapers."

"*Toute la lyre enfin?* What they call a penny-a-liner?"

"I'm sure I don't know what he's paid. I should think he'd get rather more than a penny. He's fairly successful. The things he does aren't bad."

"I must look 'em up. But meantime, will you tell me how you came to mistake me for him? Has he the Chinese type? Besides, what on earth should a little London literary man be doing at the Countess Wohenhoffen's?"

"He was standing near the door, over there, dying for a little human

human conversation, till I took pity on him. No, he hasn't exactly the Chinese type, but he's wearing a Chinese costume, and I should suppose he'd feel uncommonly hot in that exasperatingly placid Chinese head. *I'm* nearly suffocated, and I'm only wearing a *loup*. For the rest, why *shouldn't* he be here?"

"If your *loup* bothers you, pray take it off. Don't mind me."

"You're extremely good. But if I should take off my *loup*, you'd be sorry. Of course, manlike, you're hoping that I'm young and pretty."

"Well, and aren't you?"

"I'm a perfect fright. I'm an old maid."

"Thank you. Manlike, I confess, I *was* hoping you'd be young and pretty. Now my hope has received the strongest confirmation. I'm sure you are."

"Your argument, with a meretricious air of subtlety, is facile and superficial. Don't pin your faith to it. Why *shouldn't* Victor Field be here?"

"The Countess only receives tremendous swells. It's the most exclusive house in Europe."

"Are you a tremendous swell?"

"Rather! Aren't you?"

She laughed a little, and stroked her fan, a big fan of fluffy black feathers.

"That's very jolly," said he.

"What?" said she.

"That thing in your lap."

"My fan?"

"I expect you'd call it a fan."

"For goodness' sake, what would *you* call it?"

"I should call it a fan."

She

She gave another little laugh. "You have a nice instinct for the *mot juste*," she informed him.

"Oh, no," he disclaimed, modestly. "But I can call a fan a fan, when I think it won't shock the sensibilities of my hearer."

"If the Countess only receives tremendous swells," said she, "you must remember that Victor Field belongs to the Aristocracy of Talent."

"Oh, *quant à ça*, so, from the Wohenhoffsens' point of view, do the barber and the horse-leech. In this house, the Aristocracy of Talent dines with the butler."

"Is the Countess such a snob?"

"No; she's an Austrian. They draw the line so absurdly tight in Austria."

"Well, then, you leave me no alternative but to conclude that Victor Field is a tremendous swell. Didn't you notice, I bobbed him a courtesy?"

"I took the courtesy as a tribute to my Oriental magnificence. Field doesn't sound like an especially patrician name. I'd give anything to discover who you are. Can't you be induced to tell me? I'll bribe, entreat, threaten—I'll do anything you think might persuade you."

"I'll tell you at once, if you'll own up that you're Victor Field."

"Oh, I'll own up that I'm Queen Elizabeth if you'll tell me who you are. The end justifies the means."

"Then you *are* Victor Field?"

"If you don't mind suborning perjury, why should I mind committing it? Yes. And now, who are you?"

"No; I must have an unequivocal avowal. Are you or are you not Victor Field?"

"Let

"Let us put it at this, that I'm a good serviceable imitation ; an excellent substitute when the genuine article is not procurable."

"Of course, your real name isn't anything like Victor Field," she declared pensively.

"I never said it was. But I admire the way in which you give with one hand and take back with the other."

"Your real name is Wait a moment Yes, now I have it. Your real name It's rather long. You don't think it will bore you ?"

"Oh, if it's really my real name, I daresay I'm hardened to it."

"Your real name is Louis Charles Ferdinand Stanislas John Joseph Emmanuel Maria Anna."

"Mercy upon me," he cried, "what a name ! You ought to have broken it to me in instalments. And it's all Christian name at that. Can't you spare me just a little rag of a surname, for decency's sake ?"

"The surnames of royalties don't matter, Monseigneur."

"Royalties ? What ? Dear me, here's rapid promotion ! I am royal now ? And a moment ago I was a little penny-a-liner in London."

"*L'un n'empêche pas l'autre.* Have you never heard the story of the Invisible Prince ?"

"I adore irrelevancy. I seem to have read something about an invisible prince when I was young. A fairy tale, wasn't it ?"

"The irrelevancy is only apparent. The story I mean is a story of real life. Have you ever heard of the Duke of Zeln ?"

"Zeln ? Zeln ?" he repeated, reflectively. "No, I don't think so."

She clapped her hands. "Really, you do it admirably. If I weren't perfectly sure of my facts, I believe I should be taken in.
Zeln,

Zeln, as any history would tell you, as any old atlas would show you, was a little independent duchy in the centre of Germany."

"Poor, dear thing! Like Jonah in the centre of the whale," he murmured, sympathetically.

"Hush. Don't interrupt. Zeln was a little independent German duchy, and the Duke of Zeln was its sovereign. After the war with France it was absorbed by Prussia. But the ducal family still rank as royal highnesses. Of course, you've heard of the Leczinskis?"

"Lecz—— what?"

"Leczinski."

"How do you spell it?"

"L—e—c—z—i—n—s—k—i."

"Good. Capital. You have a real gift for spelling."

"Will you be quiet," she said, severely, "and answer my question? Are you familiar with the name?"

"I should never venture to be familiar with a name I didn't know."

"Ah, you don't know it? You have never heard of Stanislas Leczinski, who was king of Poland? Of Marie Leczinska, who married Louis XV.?"

"Oh, to be sure. I remember. The lady whose portrait one sees at Versailles."

"Quite so. Very well; the last representative of the Leczinskis, in the elder line, was the Princess Anna Leczinska, who, in 1858, married the Duke of Zeln. She was the daughter of John Leczinski, Duke of Grodnia, and governor of Galicia, and of the Archduchess Henrietta d'Este, a cousin of the Emperor of Austria. She was also a great heiress, and an extremely handsome woman. But the Duke of Zeln was a bad lot, a viveur, a gambler, a spendthrift. His wife, like a fool, made her entire fortune

fortune over to him, and he proceeded to play ducks and drakes with it. By the time their son was born he'd got rid of the last farthing. Their son wasn't born till '63, five years after their marriage. Well, and then, what do you suppose the duke did?"

"Reformed, of course. The wicked husband always reforms when a child is born—and there's no more money."

"You know perfectly well what he did. He petitioned the German Diet to annul the marriage. You see, having exhausted the dowry of the Princess Anna, it occurred to him that if she could only be got out of the way, he might marry another heiress, and have the spending of another fortune."

"Clever dodge. Did it come off?"

"It came off, all too well. He based his petition on the ground that the marriage had never been—I forget what the technical term is. Anyhow, he pretended that the princess had never been his wife except in name, and that the child couldn't possibly be his. The Emperor of Austria stood by his connection, like the loyal gentleman he is; used every scrap of influence he possessed to help her. But the duke, who was a Protestant (the princess was of course a Catholic), persuaded all the Protestant States in the Diet to vote in his favour. The Emperor of Austria was powerless, the Pope was powerless. And the Diet annulled the marriage."

"Ah," said the mandarin.

"Yes. The marriage was annulled, and the child declared illegitimate. Ernest Augustus, as the duke was somewhat inconsequently named, married again, and had other children, the eldest of whom is the present bearer of the title—the same Duke of Zeln one hears of, quarrelling with the croupiers at Monte Carlo. The Princess Anna, with her baby, came to Austria. The Emperor gave her a pension, and lent her one of his country houses

houses to live in—Schloss Sanct Andreas. Our hostess, by-the-bye, the Countess Wohenhoffen, was her intimate friend and her *première dame d'honneur*."

"Ah," said the mandarin.

"But the poor princess had suffered more than she could bear. She died when her child was four years old. The Countess Wohenhoffen took the infant, by the Emperor's desire, and brought him up with her own son Peter. He was called Prince Louis Leczinski. Of course, in all moral right, he was the Hereditary Prince of Zeln. His legitimacy, for the rest, and his mother's innocence, are perfectly well established, in every sense but a legal sense, by the fact that he has all the physical characteristics of the Zeln stock. He has the Zeln nose and the Zeln chin, which are as distinctive as the Hapsburg lip."

"I hope, for the poor young man's sake, though, that they're not so unbecoming?"

"They're not exactly pretty. The nose is a thought too long, the chin is a trifle short. However, I daresay the poor young man is satisfied. As I was about to tell you, the Countess Wohenhoffen brought him up, and the Emperor destined him for the Church. He even went to Rome and entered the Austrian College. He'd have been on the high road to a cardinalate by this time, if he'd stuck to the priesthood, for he had strong interest. But, lo and behold, when he was about twenty, he chucked the whole thing up."

"Ah? *Histoire de femme*?"

"Very likely, though I've never heard any one say so. At all events, he left Rome, and started upon his travels. He had no money of his own, but the Emperor made him an allowance. He started upon his travels, and he went to India, and he went to America, and he went to South Africa, and then, finally, in '87

or

or '88, he went—no one knows where. He totally disappeared, vanished into space. He's not been heard of since. Some people think he's dead. But the greater number suppose that he tired of his false position in the world, and one fine day determined to escape from it, by sinking his identity, changing his name, and going in for a new life under new conditions. They call him the Invisible Prince. His position *was* rather an ambiguous one, wasn't it? You see, he was neither one thing nor the other. He had no *état-civil*. In the eyes of the law he was a bastard, yet he knew himself to be the legitimate son of the Duke of Zeln. He was a citizen of no country, yet he was the rightful heir to a throne. He was the last descendant of Stanislas Leczinski, yet it was without authority that he bore his name. And then, of course, the rights and wrongs of the matter were only known to a few. The majority of people simply remembered that there had been a scandal. And (as a wag once said of him) wherever he went, he left his mother's reputation behind him. No wonder he found the situation irksome. Well, there is the story of the Invisible Prince."

"And a very exciting, melodramatic little story, too. For my part, I suspect your Prince met a boojum. I love to listen to stories. Won't you tell me another? Do, please."

"No, he didn't meet a boojum. He went to England, and set up for an author. The Invisible Prince and Victor Field are one and the same person."

"Oh, I say! Not really?"

"Yes, really."

"What makes you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. To begin with, I must confide to you that Victor Field is a man I've never met."

"Never met . . . ? But, by the blithe way in which you
were

were laying his sins at my door, a little while ago, I supposed you were sworn confederates."

"What's the good of masked balls, if you can't talk to people you've never met? I've never met him, but I'm one of his admirers. I like his little poems. And I'm the happy possessor of a portrait of him. It's a print after a photograph. I cut it from an illustrated paper."

"I really almost wish I *was* Victor Field. I should feel such a glow of gratified vanity."

"And the Countess Wohenhoffen has at least twenty portraits of the Invisible Prince—photographs, miniatures, life-size paintings, taken from the time he was born, almost, to the time of his disappearance. Victor Field and Louis Leczinski have countenances as like each other as two halfpence."

"An accidental resemblance, doubtless."

"No, it isn't an accidental resemblance."

"Oh, then you think it's intentional?"

"Don't be absurd. I might have thought it accidental, except for one or two odd little circumstances. *Primo*, Victor Field is a guest at the Wohenhoffs' ball."

"Oh, he *is* a guest here?"

"Yes, he is. You are wondering how I know. Nothing simpler. The same costumier who made my domino, supplied his Chinese dress. I noticed it at his shop. It struck me as rather nice, and I asked whom it was for. The costumier said, for an Englishman at the Hôtel de Bade. Then he looked in his book, and told me the Englishman's name. It was Victor Field. So, when I saw the same Chinese dress here to-night, I knew it covered the person of one of my favourite authors. But I own, like you, I was a good deal surprised. What on earth should a little London literary man be doing at the Countess Wohenhoffen's?

The Yellow Book—Vol. X. E

hoffen's? And then I remembered the astonishing resemblance between Victor Field and Louis Leczinski; and I remembered that to Louis Leczinski the Countess Wohenhoffen had been a second mother; and I reflected that though he chose to be as one dead and buried for the rest of the world, Louis Leczinski might very probably keep up private relations with the Countess. He might very probably come to her ball, incognito, and safely masked. I observed also that the Countess's rooms were decorated throughout with *white lilac*. But the white lilac is the emblematic flower of the Leczinskis; green and white are their family colours. Wasn't the choice of white lilac on this occasion perhaps designed as a secret compliment to the Prince? I was taught in the schoolroom that two and two make four."

"Oh, one can see that you've enjoyed a liberal education. But where were you taught to jump to conclusions? You do it with a grace, an assurance. I too have heard that two and two make four; but first you must catch your two and two. Really, as if there couldn't be more than one Chinese costume knocking about Vienna, during carnival week! Dear, good, sweet lady, it's of all disguises the disguise they're driving hardest, this particular season. And then to build up an elaborate theory of identities upon the mere chance resemblance of a pair of photographs! Photographs indeed! Photographs don't give the complexion. Say that your Invisible Prince is dark, what's to prevent your literary man from being fair or sandy? Or *vice versa*? And then, how is a little German Polish princeling to write poems and things in English? No, no, no; your reasoning hasn't a leg to stand on."

"Oh, I don't mind its not having legs, so long as it convinces me. As for writing poems and things in English, you yourself said that everybody is more or less English, in these days.

German

German princes are especially so. They all learn English, as a second mother-tongue. You see, like Circassian beauties, they are mostly bred up for the marriage market ; and nothing is a greater help towards a good sound remunerative English marriage, than a knowledge of the language. However, don't be frightened. I must take it for granted that Victor Field would prefer not to let the world know who he is. I happen to have discovered his secret. He may trust to my discretion."

"You still persist in imagining that I'm Victor Field?"

"I should have to be extremely simple-minded to imagine anything else. You wouldn't be a male human being if you had sat here for half an hour patiently talking about another man."

"Your argument, with a meretricious air of subtlety, is facile and superficial. I thank you for teaching me that word. I'd sit here till doomsday talking about my worst enemy, for the pleasure of talking with you."

"Perhaps we have been talking of your worst enemy. Whom do the moralists pretend a man's worst enemy is wont to be?"

"I wish you would tell me the name of the person the moralists would consider *your* worst enemy."

"I'll tell you directly, as I said before, if you'll own up."

"Your price is prohibitive. I've nothing to own up to."

"Well then—good night."

Lightly, swiftly, she fled from the conservatory, and was soon irrecoverable in the crowd.

* * *

The next morning Victor Field left Vienna for London ; but before he left he wrote a letter to Peter Wohenhoffen. In the course of it he said : "There was an Englishwoman at your ball last night with the reasoning powers of a detective in a novel.

By

By divers processes of elimination and induction, she had formed all sorts of theories about no end of things. Among others, for instance, she was willing to bet her halidome that a certain Prince Louis Leczinski, who seems to have gone on the spree some years ago, and never to have come home again—she was willing to bet anything you like that Leczinski and I—*moi qui vous parle*—were to all intents and purposes the same. Who was she, please? Rather a tall woman, in a black domino, with grey eyes, or greyish blue, and a nice voice.”

In the answer which he received from Peter Wohenhoffen towards the end of the week, Peter said: “There were nineteen Englishwomen at my mother’s party, all of them rather tall, with nice voices, and grey or blue-grey eyes. I don’t know what colours their dominoes were. Here is a list of them.”

The names that followed were names of people whom Victor Field almost certainly would never meet. The people Victor knew in London were the sort of people a little literary man might be expected to know. Most of them were respectable; some of them even deemed themselves rather smart—and patronised him right Britishly. But the nineteen names, in Peter Wohenhoffen’s list (“Oh, me! Oh, my!” cried Victor) were names to make you gasp.

All the same, he went a good deal to Hyde Park during the season, and watched the driving.

“Which of all those haughty high-born beauties is she?” he wondered futilely.

And then the season passed, and then the year; and little by little, of course, he ceased to think about her.

* * *

One afternoon last May, a man habited in accordance with
the

the fashion of the period, stopped before a hairdresser's shop in Knightsbridge somewhere, and, raising his hat, bowed to the three waxen ladies who simpered from the window.

"Oh! It's Mr. Field!" a voice behind him cried. "What are these cryptic rites that you're performing? What on earth are you bowing into a hairdresser's window for?"--a smooth, melodious voice, tinged by an inflection that was half ironical, half bewildered.

"I was saluting the type of English beauty," he answered, turning. "Fortunately, there are divergencies from it," he added, as he met the puzzled smile of his interlocutrice; a puzzled smile indeed, but, like the voice, by no means without its touch of irony.

She gave a little laugh; and then, examining the models critically, "Oh?" she questioned. "Would you call that the type? You place the type high. Their features are quite faultless, and who ever saw such complexions?"

"It's the type, ~~all~~ the same," said he. "Just as the imitation marionette is the type of English breeding."

"The imitation marionette? I'm afraid I don't follow," she confessed.

"The imitation marionettes. You've seen them at little theatres in Italy. They're actors who imitate puppets. Men and women who try to behave as if they weren't human, as if they were made of starch and whalebone instead of flesh and blood."

"Ah, yes," she assented, with another little laugh. "That *would* be rather typical of our insular methods. But do you know what an engaging, what a reviving spectacle you presented, as you stood there flourishing your hat? What do you imagine people thought? And what would have happened to you if I had just chanced to be a policeman, instead of a friend?"

"Would

"Would you have clapped your handcuffs on me? I suppose my conduct did seem rather suspicious. I was in the deepest depths of dejection. One must give some expression to one's sorrow."

"Are you going towards Kensington?" she asked, preparing to move on.

"Before I commit myself, I should like to be sure whether you are," he replied.

"You can easily discover with a little perseverance."

He placed himself beside her, and together they walked towards Kensington.

She was rather taller than the usual woman, and slender. She was exceedingly well-dressed; smartly, becomingly: a jaunty little hat of strangely twisted straw, with an aigrette springing defiantly from it; a jacket covered with mazes and labyrinths of embroidery; at her throat a big knot of white lace, the ends of which fell winding in a creamy cascade to her waist (do they call the thing a *jabot*?); and then. . . . But what can a man trust himself to write of these esoteric matters? She carried herself extremely well, too: with grace, with distinction, her head held high, even thrown back a little, superciliously. She had an immense quantity of very lovely hair. Red hair? Yellow hair? Red hair with yellow lights burning in it? Yellow hair with red fires shimmering through it? In a single loose, full billow it swept away from her forehead, and then flowed into half-a-thousand rippling, crinkling, capricious undulations. And her skin had the sensitive colouring, the fineness of texture, that are apt to accompany red hair when it's yellow, yellow hair when it's red. Her face, with its pensive, quizzical eyes, its tip-tilted nose, its rather large mouth, and the little mocking quirks and curves the lips took, was an alert, arch, witty face, a delicate high-bred

high-bred face, and withal a somewhat sensuous, emotional face ; the face of a woman with a vast deal of humour in her soul, a vast deal of mischief, of a woman who would love to tease you and mystify you, and lead you on, and put you off, and yet who, in her own way, at her own time, would know supremely well how to be kind.

But it was mischief rather than kindness that glimmered in her eyes at present, as she asked, "You were in the deepest depths of dejection ? Poor man ! Why ?"

"I can't precisely determine," said he, "whether the sympathy that seems to vibrate in your voice is genuine or counterfeit."

"Perhaps it's half and half. But my curiosity is unmixed. Tell me your troubles."

"The catalogue is long. I've sixteen hundred million. The weather, for example. The shameless beauty of this radiant spring day. It's enough to stir all manner of wild pangs and longings in the heart of an octogenarian. But, anyhow, when one's life is passed in a dungeon, one can't perpetually be singing and dancing from mere exuberance of joy, can one ?"

"Is your life passed in a dungeon ?"

"Indeed, indeed, it is. Isn't yours ?"

"It had never occurred to me that it was."

"You're lucky. Mine is passed in the dungeons of Castle Ennui."

"Oh, Castle Ennui. Ah, yes. You mean you're bored ?"

"At this particular moment I'm savouring the most exquisite excitement. But in general, when I am not working or sleeping, I'm bored to extermination—incomparably bored. If only one could work and sleep alternately, twenty-four hours a day, the year round ! There's no use trying to play in London. It's so
hard

hard to find a playmate. The English people take their pleasures without salt."

"The dungeons of Castle Ennui," she repeated meditatively. "Yes, we are fellow-prisoners. I'm bored to extermination too. Still," she added, "one is allowed out on parole, now and again. And sometimes one has really quite delightful little experiences."

"It would ill become me, in the present circumstances, to dispute that."

"But the Castle waits to reclaim us afterwards, doesn't it? That's rather a happy image, Castle Ennui."

"I'm extremely glad you approve of it; Castle Ennui is the Bastille of modern life. It is built of prunes and prisms; it has its outer court of Convention, and its inner court of Propriety; it is moated round by Respectability; and the shackles its inmates wear are forged of dull little duties and arbitrary little rules. You can only escape from it at the risk of breaking your social neck, or remaining a fugitive from social justice to the end of your days. Yes, it is a fairly decent little image."

"A bit out of something you're preparing for the press?" she suggested.

"Oh, how unkind of you!" he cried. "It was absolutely extemporaneous."

"One can never tell, with *vous autres gens-de-lettres*."

"It would be friendlier to say *nous autres gens d'esprit*."

"Aren't we proving to what degree *nous autres gens d'esprit sont bêtes*," she remarked, "by continuing to walk along this narrow pavement, when we can get into Kensington Gardens by merely crossing the street? Would it take you out of your way?"

"I have no way. I was sauntering for pleasure, if you can believe me. I wish I could hope that you have no way either.

Then

Then we could stop here, and crack little jokes together the livelong afternoon," he said, as they entered the Gardens.

"Alas, my way leads straight back to the Castle. I've promised to call on an old woman in Campden Hill."

"Disappoint her. It's good for old women to be disappointed. It whips up their circulation."

"I shouldn't much regret disappointing the old woman, and I should rather like an hour or two of stolen freedom. I don't mind owning that I've generally found you, as men go, a moderately interesting man to talk with. But the deuce of it is. . . . You permit the expression?"

"I'm devoted to the expression."

"The deuce of it is, I'm supposed to be driving."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. So many suppositions in this world are baseless."

"But there's the prison-van. It's one of the tiresome rules in the female wing of Castle Ennui that you're always supposed, more or less, to be driving. And though you may cheat the authorities by slipping out of the prison-van directly it's turned the corner, and sending it on ahead, there it remains, a factor that can't be eliminated. The prison-van will relentlessly await my arrival in the old woman's street."

"That only adds to the sport. Let it wait. When a factor can't be eliminated, it should be haughtily ignored. Besides, there are higher considerations. If you leave me, what shall I do with the rest of this weary day?"

"You can go to your club."

"Merciful lady! What sin have I committed? I never go to my club, except when I've been wicked, as a penance. If you will permit me to employ a metaphor—oh, but a tried and trusty metaphor—when one ship on the sea meets another in distress, it

stops

stops and comforts it, and forgets all about its previous engagements and the prison-van and everything. Shall we cross to the north, and see whether the Serpentine is in its place? Or would you prefer to inspect the eastern front of the Palace? Or may I offer you a penny chair?"

"I think a penny chair would be the maddest of the three dissipations."

And they sat down in penny chairs.

"It's rather jolly here, isn't it?" said he. "The trees, with their black trunks, and their leaves, and things. Have you ever seen such sumptuous foliage? And the greensward, and the shadows, and the sunlight, and the atmosphere, and the mistiness—isn't it like pearl-dust and gold-dust floating in the air? It's all got up to imitate the background of a Watteau. We must do our best to be frivolous and ribald, and supply a proper foreground. How big and fleecy and white the clouds are. Do you think they're made of cotton-wool? And what do you suppose they paint the sky with? There never was such a brilliant, breath-taking blue. It's much too nice to be natural. And they've sprinkled the whole place with scent, haven't they? You notice how fresh and sweet it smells. If only one could get rid of the sparrows—the cynical little beasts! hear how they're chortling—and the people, and the nursemaids and children. I have never been able to understand why they admit the public to the parks."

"Go on," she encouraged him. "You're succeeding admirably in your effort to be ribald."

"But that last remark wasn't ribald in the least—it was desperately sincere. I do think it's inconsiderate of them to admit the public to the parks. They ought to exclude all the lower classes, the People, at one fell swoop, and then to discriminate tremendously amongst the others."

"Mercy,

"Mercy, what undemocratic sentiments! The People, the poor dear People—what have they done?"

"Everything. What haven't they done? One could forgive their being dirty and stupid and noisy and rude; one could forgive their ugliness, the ineffable banality of their faces, their goggle-eyes, their protruding teeth, their ungainly motions; but the trait one can't forgive is their venality. They're so mercenary. They're always thinking how much they can get out of you—everlastingly touching their hats and expecting you to put your hand in your pocket. Oh, no, believe me, there's no health in the People. Ground down under the iron heel of despotism, reduced to a condition of hopeless serfdom, I don't say that they might not develop redeeming virtues. But free, but sovereign, as they are in these days, they're everything that is squalid and sordid and offensive. Besides, they read such abominably bad literature."

"In that particular they're curiously like the aristocracy, aren't they?" said she. "By-the-bye, when are you going to publish another book of poems?"

"Apropos of bad literature?"

"Not altogether bad. I rather like your poems."

"So do I," said he. "It's useless to pretend that we haven't tastes in common."

They were both silent for a bit. She looked at him oddly, an inscrutable little light flickering in her eyes. All at once she broke out with a merry trill of laughter.

"What are you laughing at?" he demanded.

"I'm hugely amused," she answered.

"I wasn't aware that I'd said anything especially good."

"You're building better than you know. But if I am amused, *you* look ripe for tears. What is the matter?"

"Every heart knows its own bitterness. Don't pay the least
attention

attention to me. You mustn't let moodiness of mine cast a blight upon your high spirits."

"No fear. There are pleasures that nothing can rob of their sweetness. Life is not all dust and ashes. There are bright spots."

"Yes, I've no doubt there are."

"And thrilling little adventures—no?"

"For the bold, I dare say."

"None but the bold deserve them. Sometimes it's one thing, and sometimes it's another."

"That's very certain."

"Sometimes, for instance, one meets a man one knows, and speaks to him. And he answers with a glibness! And then, almost directly, what do you suppose one discovers?"

"What?"

"One discovers that the wretch hasn't the ghost of a notion who one is—that he's totally and absolutely forgotten one!"

"Oh, I say! Really?"

"Yes, really. You can't deny that *that's* an exhilarating little adventure."

"I should think it might be. One could enjoy the man's embarrassment."

"Or his lack of embarrassment. Some men are of an assurance, of a *sang froid*! They'll place themselves beside you, and walk with you, and talk with you, and even propose that you should pass the livelong afternoon cracking jokes with them in a garden, and never breathe a hint of their perplexity. They'll brazen it out."

"That's distinctly heroic, Spartan, of them, don't you think? Internally, poor dears, they're very likely suffering agonies of discomfiture."

"We'll

"We'll hope they are. Could they decently do less?"

"And fancy the mental struggles that must be going on in their brains. If I were a man in such a situation I'd throw myself upon the woman's mercy. I'd say, 'Beautiful, sweet lady, I know I know you. Your name, your entirely charming and appropriate name, is trembling on the tip of my tongue. But, for some unaccountable reason, my brute of a memory chooses to play the fool. If you've a spark of Christian kindness in your soul, you'll come to my rescue with a little clue.'"

"If the woman had a Christian sense of the ridiculous in her soul, I fear you'd throw yourself on her mercy in vain."

"What *is* the good of tantalising people?"

"Besides, the woman might reasonably feel slightly humiliated to find herself forgotten in that bare-faced manner."

"The humiliation surely would be all the man's. Have you heard from the Wohenhoffs lately?"

"The—what? The—who?"

"The Wohenhoffs."

"What are the Wohenhoffs? Are they persons? Are they things?"

"Oh, nothing. My enquiry was merely dictated by a thirst for knowledge. It occurred to me vaguely that you might have worn a black domino at a masked ball they gave, the Wohenhoffs. Are you sure you didn't."

"I've a great mind to punish your forgetfulness by pretending that I did."

"She was rather tall, like you, and she had grey eyes, and a nice voice, and a laugh that was sweeter than the singing of nightingales. She was monstrously clever, too, with a flow of language that would have made her a leader in any sphere. She was also a perfect fiend. I have always been anxious to meet her again,

again, in order that I might ask her to marry me. I'm strongly disposed to believe that she was you. Was she?"

"If I say yes, will you at once proceed to ask me to marry you?"

"Try it and see."

"*Ce n'est pas la peine.* It occasionally happens that a woman's already got a husband."

"She said she was an old maid."

"Do you dare to insinuate that I look like an old maid?"

"Yes."

"Upon my word!"

"Would you wish me to insinuate that you look like anything so insipid as a young girl? *Were* you the woman of the black domino?"

"I should need further information, before being able to make up my mind. Are the—what's their name?—Wohenheimer?—are the Wohenheimers people one can safely confess to knowing? Oh, you're a man, and don't count. But a woman? It sounds a trifle Jewish, Wohenheimer. But of course there are Jews and Jews."

"You're playing with me like the cat in the adage. It's too cruel. No one is responsible for his memory."

"And to think that this man took me down to dinner not two months ago!" she murmured in her veil.

"You're as hard as nails. In whose house? Or—stay. Prompt me a little. Tell me the first syllable of your name. Then the rest will come with a rush."

"My name is Matilda Muggins."

"I've a great mind to punish your untruthfulness by pretending to believe you," said he. "Have you really got a husband?"

"Why do you doubt it?"

"I don't

"I don't doubt it. Have you?"

"I don't know what to answer."

"Don't you know whether you've got a husband?"

"I don't know what I'd better let you believe. Yes, on the whole, I think you may as well assume that I've got a husband."

"And a lover, too?"

"Really! I like your impertinence!"

"I only asked to show a polite interest. I knew the answer would be an indignant negative. You're an Englishwoman, and you're *nice*. Oh, one can see with half an eye that you're *nice*. But that a nice Englishwoman should have a lover is as inconceivable as that she should smoke a pipe. It's only the reg'lar bad-uns in England who have lovers. There's nothing between the family pew and the divorce court. One nice Englishwoman is a match for the whole Eleven Thousand Virgins of Cologne."

"To hear you talk, one might fancy you were not English yourself. For a man of the name of Field, you're uncommonly foreign. You *look* rather foreign too, you know, by-the-bye. You haven't at all an English cast of countenance."

"I've enjoyed the advantages of a foreign education. I was brought up abroad."

"Where your features unconsciously assimilated themselves to a foreign type? Where you learned a hundred thousand strange little foreign things, no doubt? And imbibed a hundred thousand unprincipled little foreign notions? And all the ingenuous little foreign prejudices and misconceptions concerning England?"

"Most of them."

"*Perfide Albion*? English hypocrisy?"

"Oh, yes, the English are consummate hypocrites. But there's only

only one objection to their hypocrisy—it so rarely covers any wickedness. It's such a disappointment to see a creature stalking towards you, laboriously draped in sheep's clothing, and then to discover that it's only a sheep. You, for instance, as I took the liberty of intimating a moment ago, in spite of your perfectly respectable appearance, are a perfectly respectable woman. If you weren't, wouldn't I be making furious love to you, though!"

"As I am, I can see no reason why you shouldn't make furious love to me, if it would amuse you. There's no harm in firing your pistol at a person who's bullet-proof."

"No; it's merely a wanton waste of powder and shot. However, I shouldn't stick at that. The deuce of it is. . . . You permit the expression?"

"I'm devoted to the expression."

"The deuce of it is, you profess to be married."

"Do you mean to say that you, with your unprincipled foreign notions, would be restrained by any such consideration as that?"

"I shouldn't be for an instant—if I weren't in love with you."

"*Comment donc? Déjà?*" she cried with a laugh.

"Oh, *déjà!* Why not? Consider the weather—consider the scene. Is the air soft, is it fragrant? Look at the sky—good heavens!—and the clouds, and the shadows on the grass, and the sunshine between the trees. The world is made of light to-day, of light and colour, and perfume and music. *Tutt' intorno canta amor, amor, amore!* What would you have? One recognises one's affinity. One doesn't need a lifetime. You began the business at the Wohenhoffs' ball. To-day you've merely put on the finishing touches."

"Oh, then I *am* the woman you met at the masked ball?"

"Look me in the eye, and tell me you're not."

"I haven't

"I haven't the faintest interest in telling you I'm not. On the contrary, it rather pleases me to let you imagine that I am."

"She owed me a grudge, you know. I hoodwinked her like everything."

"Oh, did you? Then, as a sister woman, I should be glad to serve as her instrument of vengeance. Do you happen to have such a thing as a watch about you?"

"Yes."

"Will you be good enough to tell me what o'clock it is?"

"What are your motives for asking?"

"I'm expected at home at five."

"Where do you live?"

"What are your motives for asking?"

"I want to call upon you."

"You might wait till you're invited."

"Well, invite me—quick!"

"Never."

"Never?"

"Never, never, never. A man who's forgotten me as you have!"

"But if I've only met you once at a masked ball. . . ."

"Can't you be brought to realise that every time you mistake me for that woman of the masked ball you turn the dagger in the wound?"

"But if you won't invite me to call upon you, how and when am I to see you again?"

"I haven't an idea," she answered, cheerfully. "I must go now. Good bye." She rose.

"One moment. Before you go will you allow me to look at the palm of your left hand?"

"What for?"

"I can tell fortunes. I'm extremely good at it. I'll tell you yours."

"Oh, very well," she assented, sitting down again : and guilelessly she pulled off her glove.

He took her hand, a beautifully slender, nervous hand, warm and soft, with rosy, tapering fingers.

"Oho ! you *are* an old maid after all," he cried. "There's no wedding ring."

"You villain !" she gasped, snatching the hand away.

"I promised to tell your fortune. Haven't I told it correctly ?"

"You needn't rub it in, though. Eccentric old maids don't like to be reminded of their condition."

"Will you marry *me* ?"

"Why do you ask ?"

"Partly from curiosity. Partly because it's the only way I can think of, to make sure of seeing you again. And then, I like your hair. Will you ?"

"I can't."

"Why not ?"

"The stars forbid. And I'm ambitious. In my horoscope it is written that I shall either never marry at all, or—marry royalty."

"Oh, bother ambition ! Cheat your horoscope. Marry me. Will you ?"

"If you care to follow me," she said, rising again, "you can come and help me to commit a little theft."

He followed her to an obscure and sheltered corner of a flowery path, where she stopped before a bush of white lilac.

"There are no keepers in sight, are there ?" she questioned.

"I don't see any," said he.

"Then allow me to make you a receiver of stolen goods," said she, breaking off a spray, and handing it to him.

"Thank

"Thank you. But I'd rather have an answer to my question."

"Isn't that an answer?"

"Is it?"

"White lilac—to the Invisible Prince?"

"The Invisible Prince Then you *are* the black domino!"

"Oh, I suppose so."

"And you *will* marry me?"

"I'll tell the aunt I live with to ask you to dinner."

"But will you marry me?"

"I thought you wished me to cheat my horoscope?"

"How could you find a better means of doing so?"

"What! if I should marry Louis Leczinski . . . ?"

"Oh, to be sure. You would have it that I was Louis Leczinski. But, on that subject, I must warn you seriously——"

"One instant," she interrupted. "People must look other people straight in the face when they're giving serious warnings. Look straight into my eyes, and continue your serious warning."

"I must really warn you seriously," said he, biting his lip, "that if you persist in that preposterous delusion about my being Louis Leczinski, you'll be most awfully sold. I have nothing on earth to do with Louis Leczinski. Your ingenious little theories, as I tried to convince you at the time, were absolute romance."

Her eyebrows raised a little, she kept her eyes fixed steadily on his—oh, in the drollest fashion, with a gaze that seemed to say "How admirably you do it! I wonder whether you imagine I believe you. Oh, you fibber! Aren't you ashamed to tell me such abominable fibs?"

They stood still, eyeing each other thus, for something like twenty seconds, and then they both laughed and walked on.

An Emblem of Translation

By Richard Garnett, C.B., LL.D.

NOT of one growth the solemn forests are ;
Not solely is the stately alley made
Of towers of foliage and tents of shade,
Sturdy, deep-rooted, massy, secular :

But briar astray, and bines that ramble far,
And cup and crown of Bacchus blend and braid
With all that creeps disabled and afraid
To mount by its own might toward sun and star.

A lowly birth ! yet lovely even so,
Through bush and brake it serpentine doth wend,
Vagrant with baffled roving to and fro,
Till soaring stem or stooping bough befriend :
Then high the vine shall as the cedar grow,
And from his summit shall her fruit depend.

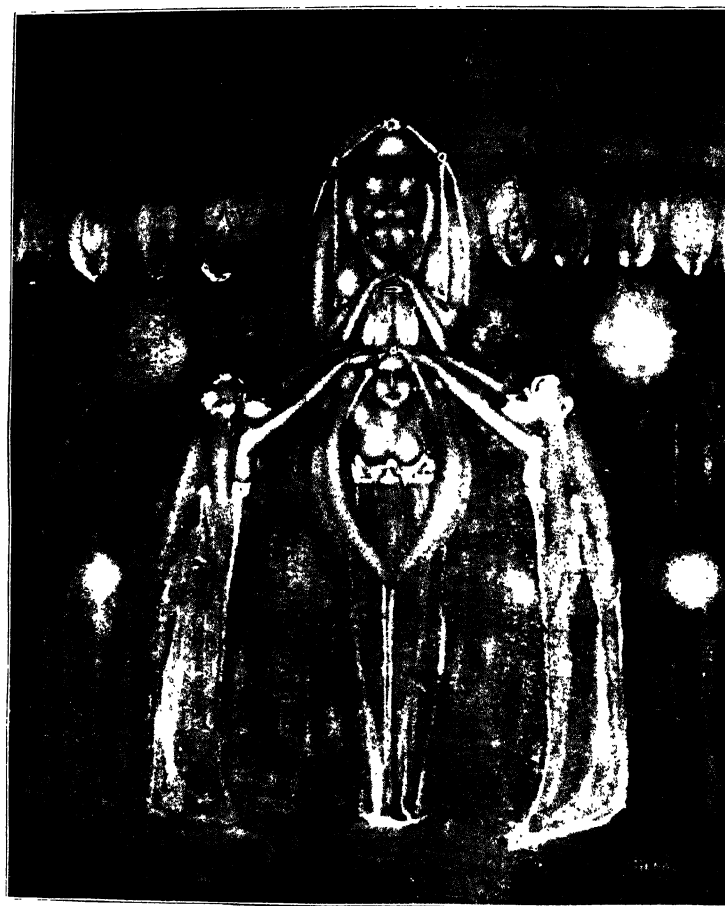
Two Pictures

By J. Herbert McNair

I. The Dew

II. Ysighlu

“The very shadows in the cave worshipped her. The little waves threw themselves at her feet, and kissed them.”





La Goya

A Passion of the Peruvian Desert

By Samuel Mathewson Scott

October.

YES, you are right. It is a queer existence for a civilised man to lead ; but habit subdues us to all things. Here I have lived for two years on this barren rock, overlooking the little bay where the desert meets the sea. A lonely life, too, for there are only three of us, myself and the two young Peruvians, Manuel and Francisco, who share the duties of the hacienda with me. The estate is so vast, and needs so much attention, that there are rarely more than two of us together at a time. They were educated in England in the days before the Chilian War, when all Peru was rich, and they are the best of companions for a moody man. Like all their race, they know none of our gloomy introspection. Life for them is pleasure and laughter : and if they indulge more effusively in affection and more emphatically in hatred than we do, one soon grows accustomed to demonstrations. Had you told me, once upon a time, that I could have endured such a life, I should have laughed at you ; now it is a delight to me. It is free as no other life could be. We are lords of all about us ; we make our own laws, set our own fashions, determine

mine our own conventions ; we have no one to envy, no one to imitate.

The whole of this northern coast of Peru, from Ecuador for many a weary league south to beyond Sechura, and back to the sun-baked outposts of the Andes, is a waste of desert broken only here and there by fertile valleys and quebradas where the scanty waters of the western slopes of the mountains find outlets to the sea. It is the ideal land of eternal sunshine. Rain falls but once in seven years. It is the wild torrential rain of the tropics, and after it is over the desert becomes a garden of green grass and flowers. The sun soon turns this verdure to natural hay, which endures through the long years of drought, and with the bean-like fruit of the algarroba trees in the quebradas, affords pasturage for great herds of goats and horses and cattle. The year is one long summer. It is October already, but who would dream it ? Here in this realm of wind and sand and sunlight and sea, it might be June or January or any other month. There is a fascination in this monotony of climate. It provokes us to laziness, inertness, insouciance. It makes us dread the land where seasons change, where rains and snows and storms challenge resistance, and where no to-morrow is like to-day. Here there is Lotus in the air, even though the dreams that come are but stupid lapses of common sense. Why should we struggle when life can be so easy ?

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay ? You may think so, but I doubt it. There is a beauty in the ceaseless roaring of the wind and the beating of the surf. Habit, habit, what slaves it makes of us ! Treeless deserts and shifting sands, blistering suns and icy midnights, even the low-browed Indians become a part of ourselves, and change would seem like exile. Where days glide on to days, and cares are as flies that we can
brush

brush away, it's hard to muster courage for seriousness. Even the basis of those cares is simple enough—our cotton, our cattle, and the charcoal, nothing more.

I said there were only three of us, but I must not forget the fourth, old Juan, our major-domo, the intermediary between ourselves and the *peons*, or Indian labourers. Unfortunately, fate has made him a friend rather than a servant. He is a full-blooded Indian, and he cannot be less than sixty. He was born on this hacienda, and was a factor in it long before we ever came here. His whole experience of life is limited by its boundaries. Yet he is a born ruler of men; with iron will, fluent tongue, and a physical energy that is marvellous, he wields an unquestioned authority over the people. In spite of his years he never knows fatigue. He has a grand body and Herculean shoulders, but life on horseback has stunted and bowed his legs. The head is massive and powerful, with a face as wrinkled, brown, and grotesque as a Japanese mask. His anger would make even a Salvini envious. The clenched fists, the blazing eyes, the trembling body towering to its height, and the rolling voice full of a thousand terrible modulations, make up a picture that recalls our dreams of patriarchal grandeur. The *peons* cower like curs before it. Then he has a slave-like, inborn submission and devotion to his masters, coupled with the more modern, but still instinctive, sense that those who would rule must first learn to obey. With it all, he is a cynic of the first water. He knows no illusions, his laugh is a masterpiece of amused contempt. In the old days of his youth he took all that his narrow life offered. Now the oracle of the country side, he can rival La Rochefoucauld in his sneers at women, and he could have enjoyed Voltaire. His one occasional weakness is drink, the native weakness; and sometimes, in a maudlin mood, after listening humbly to my reproaches, he will tell me of the
gay

gay days that are gone, and of the joys life has for him even now, and finish with a sigh—"O Patroncito, what a pity it is that I must die!"

I don't suppose the world contains a happier race than the Cholos—the Indians who form the great bulk of the coast population of Peru. They gather in little communities or villages, cultivate small chacras or farms along the rivers, and work as labourers on the haciendas during the cotton season; or else they become the half-serflike tenantry of the large estates, live among the quebradas of the desert, wherever *water* is found, breed herds of goats, and do such work for their patron, or master, as the needs of the hacienda require. They are a kindly, listless, gentle people; not exactly lazy, but slow, and without much energy. They have no ambitions or torturing aspirations. Their wants are easily met, the chacras and the herds supply most of them; the proceeds of their labour are sufficient for the purchase of the little fineries with which they deck themselves for a fiesta. And is life anything more than food and satisfied vanity?

But don't from this conclude that they are dull and besotted; far from it. Win their confidence and you will find them full of gay chatter, light jests and pretty sentiments, and their hospitality is spontaneous and boundless to those whom they like and who treat them with kindness. Naturally those who dwell together in villages are cleverer and more civilised than those who are isolated in the desert; almost all of them can read and write.

The morals of the community are a study; they are singularly like no morals at all. Such a conclusion, however, would be superficial. They are very punctilious in the observance of the conventions sanctioned by their point of view. I suppose that not five per cent. of the Cholo population are legally married;

married; yet prostitution, in our sense, is unknown. Their union is a mutual agreement, without many conditions. A woman reaches maturity when she is between fourteen and fifteen. During all her girlhood she has lived in a house where privacy, as we know it, is unthought of. She has heard every part of the human body spoken of, as the most natural thing in the world. She cannot imagine why a moral or formal distinction should be drawn between them. For all that she is as innocent as a baby. It is only the awakening of her passions through the development of her physical nature that gives her an instinctive knowledge of the relation of the sexes. At one of the everlasting fandangoes, she meets some man who shows a preference for her; later on he proves his love by making her small presents and paying her small attentions. Wooings are brief in this land of the sun. If her parents agree, she is his; if they oppose, he settles the difficulty with a coup and runs away with her to his home. Thus she becomes his wife, and his dominion over her is supreme. He may ill treat her and neglect her, he may have four or five other women scattered about the country, either at their homes or with some of his relatives, it makes no difference; so long as she is with him and he supports her, she will be faithful. This is an almost invariable rule, and it is the basis of her respectability. He may grow tired of her before a year is over and send her back to her people perhaps with a very lively reminder of her hard luck to keep her company; her father's house will be freely open to her and no shame of any sort will attach to her. As the months go by another lover may appear who cares little about the past. They know nothing of our sentimental yesterdays. As a rule though, the men are kind and good to their *compromisas* and remain with them all their lives.

When

When young, the women are very attractive, with gorgeous eyes and perfect teeth, glossy raven hair and graceful voluptuous figures. They soon grow stout and fade, however, but the beauty of the eyes always remains.

Religion is only a name among the natives. True they call their children after all the saints in the calendar—and they duly celebrate all the feasts of the church, but there is more of form than of faith in their devotion. It is fear not love that moves them. Wherever a village is able to maintain a *cura*, a church adorns one side of the principal plaza. From the belfry, bells jangle discordantly all day long, and black robed women flock to masses and prayers ; but superstition has more place than piety in their hearts. The priests are ignorant and corrupt, debauched and licentious. They think little of the value of example as a teacher. With them, religion is a business that has its set hours ; those over, playtime comes. So religion rests with equal lightness on the people. Children must be baptized, confession must be made now and then, an Ave Maria and the sign of the cross are a sure protection in danger, a candle burned before a saint brings the fulfilment of wishes, scapulas ward off the devil, the good see heaven, the bad are burned ; but Mary and the church are indulgent with human frailty ; all this they know and believe, and feel secure. I must confess that there are occasions when they show a marked aptitude for mendacity, and they do not always respect the laws of property ; yet their kindly hearts keep them out of any serious mischief. Docile and obedient, they respect authority and endure even oppression without complaint. Were it not for the taxes and the excisemen they would never know a trouble.

Such are my people, such is the halcyon placidity of their lives—as level as the desert but as full of sunshine. Do you wonder
that

that the spirit is contagious and that I say I am content? It is a purely physical existence, always on horseback and out of doors, but health such as ours amply repays all the sacrifices that seem to bewilder you. Ennui comes of excess, not of simplicity.

Well, the night is running away. Over the reef, at the mouth of the harbour, the waves are howling like drunken men in a quarrel. The wind is full of ghostly suggestions. The halyards of the flag-poles on the verandah are tapping like woodpeckers against a tree. In the great reaches of the rushing tide the *balsa* at the buoy tugs on its chain like an impatient captive. Across the bay, the lights of the native villages twinkle like fallen stars. A hazy moonlight makes the world mysterious. The rhythm of the sea is quick, like the heart-beats of desire. While the world sleeps, Nature is astir. Good-night.

November.

I did not think when I last wrote you that my next letter would be a confession, but it seems that it must be.

Forty miles to the south of us, across the desert, lies the valley of the Chira, the principal river of this northern region, crowded with little villages and towns, to one of which I had despatched old Juan on a commission. The other morning, while I was sitting at my lonely breakfast, I heard the jingle of the unmistakable silver spurs on the verandah, and the old man entered, still wrapped in his *poncho* after his long night ride—for here most journeys are made at night with a brief bivouac for rest, to escape the merciless sun.

He made his report and paused.

“Well, what’s the news on the river, Juan?” I asked him.

“Patron,” he said, tentatively; “next week there is to be a great fandango at Amotape. Wouldn’t you like to go?”

“O pshaw!”

"O pshaw ! what's the use, Juan ? It's always the same old story : nothing but a long ride, no sleep, and less fun."

My indifference to such pleasures, which, to his mind, are all the reward life gives us for the trouble of living, is Juan's greatest trial.

"But, señor, the prettiest Cholitas from all along the river are to be there ; you can't fail to enjoy it."

I laughed.

"O well, Juan, mi amigo, we'll see when the time comes."

The poor old fellow sighed, for the answer, which he had heard so often before, seemed hopeless ; and so the matter dropped.

When, however, a few days later, Manuel came in from the cotton-fields in one of our valleys, where he had been slaving for a week, and heard of the approaching fiesta, he would listen to none of my objections ; go we must. So one afternoon we set out ; he, Juan and I, and our boys, for the river.

The desert is truly trackless ; there is not a road across it, only narrow trails, which the shifting sands are for ever obliterating ; but the boys are unerring guides. Even on the darkest night, some instinct keeps them to the faint silver line that to our eyes is imperceptible. We sped along over sandy tracts and rocky stretches, dotted with withered thorn bushes. Touches of green relieved the glaring expanse as we crossed the little quebradas, where the algarroba trees send down their long tap roots, sometimes fifty feet, to the retentive sub-soil, where the water still lingers. The sun blazed fiercely, but the air was dry and elastic. The wind blows always from the southward ; from the sea by day, from the shore by night, heaping the sand into great crescent-shaped, moving hills or *medenas*, that creep stealthily over the level waste, growing hour by hour, and burying all things that lie in their path. It was night when we descended the steep cliffs into the valley,

valley, and rode along the silent *chacras* into the town—scattered suburbs of cane huts, a few rows of more pretentious mud-covered houses, then the white plastered dwellings of the plaza.

The narrow, dusty streets were alight with lamps and thronged with merry-makers wending their way to the *picantes* and dances. Some of the men awkwardly sported the cheap ready-made raiment that is beginning to invade even this country, but most of them adhered to the more graceful old costume of stiffly starched shirts, white trousers, and coloured sashes. The women wore gay prints of every hue, ribbons and flowers, and trinkets ; while over the head and shoulders was wrapped the soft black *manta*, or the more festive pale blue and white scarf of Guadalupe with its deep fringes of native lace.

Juan, who is nothing if not an epicure, readily discovered the best *picante*, and soon we were at supper. A *picante* might be called in English the native gala day restaurant. Throughout the fiesta food may be had day and night ; all the world dines there, for the women are too busy holidaying to waste the time in household duties. *Seco*, or dry stew of goat's meat with rice and sweet potatoes, slightly flavoured ; *churasco*, fried steak with onions and an egg ; *Chicharones*, or the small pieces of pork that separate from the fat in rendering lard—a popular delicacy with the Indians ; *salchichones*, or sausages ; and last, and best of all, the *tamales*—a highly-seasoned stew of pork and chicken, steamed in an outer paste of ground maize, wrapped in thick pudding-cloths of maize leaves. The dust of the road that filled our throats and the *aji*, or the hot red pepper, with which the dishes were plentifully sprinkled, made very welcome the great gourdfuls of *chicha* with which they served us. *Chicha* was the royal beverage of the Inca long before the conquest ; the native beer, brewed from maize. It is the favourite still, in spite of all modern innovations.

innovations. Gourds serve for everything, plates and cups, and bowls and platters, work-baskets, water-bottles, and even bath-tubs, and the service is apt to be a wooden spoon, although crockery and pewter are now common enough.

While we were feasting, Juan had been scouting for the most promising fandango. Half an hour later I found myself comfortably stretched on a bench in a large bare room, puffing at my pipe, and yielding to the pleasant languor that follows a long ride and a hearty supper. The *bancos*, or seats, built around the lime-whitened walls, were crowded with guests. Juan's promise had been fulfilled, for certainly the prettiest girls of the river were around us ; a fact which had instantly impressed Manuel, for he was passing from group to group, scattering gay nothings and laughter everywhere. Fortunately we were too well known for our presence to be an embarrassment to our simpler friends. The natural abandon of such a gathering is its only charm to a civilized man—yet, had we been the greatest strangers, old Juan's diplomacy would soon have set every one at ease. He has a marvellous mastery over awkward situations.

The mirth was a little subdued, although bottles and glasses were circulating and healths were being drunk. It is a gross breach of etiquette to toast back to the person who has toasted you ; that each may have his share you must pay your salutations to another. Every one, men and women alike, were smoking the little yellow papered cigarettes, in unconscious emulation of the open petroleum lamps that lighted up the scene and made swaying shadows of the corners. The dancing was only beginning, in spite of the fact that at one side of the room the orchestra was bravely striving to stir up some excitement. In unison with a rather metallic guitar, a blind harpist tugged at the strings of a strangely shaped instrument with an enormous sounding board.

On

On either side of him sat two men, who emphasised the broken time of the dance by pounding on the sounding board with their hands, while the harpist sang the familiar words of the song, or improvised with considerable cleverness new verses for the occasion. The whole orchestra joined in the chorus in a high nasal key. Noise was more important than melody.

The dance is always the same, and is performed by couples as many as the floor will accommodate ; all present mark time by the clapping of hands. In these diversions old and young participate ; they have known the dance from childhood. The women far surpass the men in grace, they show less self-consciousness and effort. With the most expert, the movement is from the hips entirely, and a woman has reached perfection when she can go through the measures with a bottle balanced on her head. I have never seen a man who was able to perform this feat. There are three figures ; in the first, the pair advance and retire and turn, waving their handkerchiefs while their feet move to the rhythm of the music. During a pause the man approaches a large table covered with bottles, where the hostess is dispensing Anizado, a fiery liquor distilled from aniseed and alcohol, and purchases a large tumbler-full, which he and his companion sip alternately. The second figure runs more quickly. The song and the music are louder. With knees bent in an attitude of supplication, the man hovers about the woman who spins coquettishly before him. There is much of liberty but little of license, still the suggestion remains. Again a pause. Amidst bravos and handclapping, the third figure begins. Feet speed in and out, the bodies whirl and sway to the flash of the handkerchiefs. The song and the music wax louder and faster in half barbaric excitement. Shouts and cries encourage and applaud the dancers. The tumult is deafening, the dance delirious. Squibs

sputter beneath the flying feet. As if possessed they advance and turn and retreat, until, through sheer exhaustion, they are forced to stop.

Perhaps you think it a vulgar scene—yet I enjoyed it. After all, physical pleasure is our real joy. To lie there indolently and watch the lamplight gleam on dusky bosoms ; to see the dark eyes flash in the excitement of noise and movement ; to forget tomorrow, and to recall half forgotten yesterdays ; to think of whiter breasts and nimbler tongues ; of the life that is over and gone, all in a sensuous thoughtless way, is a pleasant enough sensation. For what is the use of pondering over life and of trying to find something in it that is really worth the trouble ? We know it is only the drift of years, the desire of youth, the regret of age and then the eternal silence. It is better to let our pulses throb while they can ; to give over the wondering and the idealising, and to take such joy of life as our senses give us. There may be a morning of sermons and soda water somewhere, but who cares ? So I lay there and smoked.

The crowd gathered about the door jostled and swayed, and as it finally parted, an old woman and a young girl entered and took seats across the room directly opposite me. The girl threw back her scarf and revealed a face that at once brought me back to realities. As usual, philosophy surrendered to life, and I watched her intently. Her beauty was thrilling. She was about sixteen, just in the prime of her womanhood, for after that age these women grow stout. Her face was perfect in type. A flush of rose gave life to the faint duskiness of her cheeks where two dimples played at hide and seek with their twin brothers lurking at the corners of her full mouth. From some forgotten strain, she had inherited the Inca nose with its broad base, its exquisite aquiline curve, and its fine nostrils ; to my mind, in its purity,
the

the most perfect of human features. Like all her race, she had teeth of ivory. Don't think I am raving when I tell you that I have never seen eyes in which so many emotions seemed to lurk. They were dark, of course, in a setting of high arched brows and long sweeping lashes, otherwise they defy description. Her forehead was low, but broader than is usual, though the waves of her black glossy hair sent out a faint ripple or two of down upon her temples.

There was an unmistakable superiority about her which her companions seemed to recognise, for they approached her with deference. Even her dress displayed more taste than that of the women about her, yet she was arrayed according to the same simple rules.

There was no use trying to be indifferent before such a picture. I crossed over to where she was sitting and bowed elaborately.

"Good evening, Señorita," and in the Spanish fashion, I told her my name and assured her I was at her orders.

"Your servant, Gregoria Paz," she replied with perfect composure.

"Señorita Goya," I said, using the pretty diminutive of her name, "I am sorry to confess that I do not dance, but will you not permit me to sit here and talk to you?"

Most of the women would have been shy and awkward at first, but she made way for me most courteously. A natural coquetry gave grace to every movement she made; yet she tempered it with an air of dignity and reserve that put even me upon my best behaviour. The sensation was certainly amusing. My attentions pleased her, that was evident; but whenever I ventured upon even conversational liberties she had a way of tossing back her head and looking at me out of the corners of her great flashing eyes,

eyes, as she blew the smoke of her cigarette ceilingward, that was inscrutable. Where had she learned it all? That was the question. I wondered if one of Pizarro's haughty dons had wooed and won some great-great-grandmother of hers in the long ago.

Nobody dared to disturb us, and time flew along as we laughed and chatted. She lived in the village across the river, where her father owned some small gardens, she said. Would she let me come to see her? Their house was too humble for such a guest as I, but it was always at my disposal.

The dance was growing uproarious. I had noticed that Manuel, in the midst of his own flirtations, had been keeping an amused eye upon my occupation. I saw him walk over to the old harpist, and soon after I became conscious that we were the centre of observation, for the old man was improvising verses in praise of myself and complimenting the Goya on her good fortune. This naturally prompted a response from me, in the shape of refreshments for the devoted and perspiring orchestra.

A little later, Manuel and I withdrew to snatch what sleep we could before setting out on our ride under the morning stars. Even old Juan discreetly joined in the chaff with which Manuel pelted me as we galloped home.

And—would you believe it?—yesterday I sent the good old fellow off to the Goya with a little trinket and a letter that would, in its fervent flourishes, remind you most ludicrously of the valentines of your youth; and I am awaiting her reply as impatiently as the most orthodox of lovers.

December.

To-day is like anything but your idea of the last one of December; warm and bright, with a bustling, noisy, dusty wind from the desert to make a field of daisies out of the deep green stretches

stretches of the ocean ; and the way in which I spent Christmas was quite as wide a departure from your conventions.

For a week before the festival I had been busy with my men at the far end of the hacienda. I won't tell you about the blazing heat of the summer desert, our little bivouacs behind the sandhills, our haphazard meals, and all the other commonplaces of this life of ours. Although I was anxious to conclude the work, I couldn't deny my good fellows their holiday ; but we laboured on until the last light had faded out of the west. A hasty dinner in a little hut, a few stern injunctions to the peons as to prompt return, and I found myself confronted with Christmas Eve. However, I was not without resources. Amotape was only six miles away, and the festivities promised there were attracting the whole country-side. For two or three days previous, little donkey-borne parties of holiday-makers had passed us on the trails bound for that centre of delight. Then I felt sure the Goya would be there. I had not been able to see her since our first meeting, but I had given old Juan and my messengers many a long ride through the night to carry her my hyperbolical letters, laden with sighs, reproaches, and protestations. Juan assured me that her parents gladly favoured my suit, while her little answers, that needed many a re-reading before I could fathom their scrawled, mis-spelt lines, had not left me hopeless. At first they had been stiff and formal, condescending thanks, and nothing more ; but latterly they had taken on a more sympathetic tone. So I turned my horse toward Amotape.

The stars twinkled here and there ; far in the east a line of clouds over the hills still hid the rising moon. Every now and then a rocket burst and added to the splendour of the heavens. The town was *en fête* when I arrived ; every house was lighted up ; from every corner came the clatter and the song of a fandango.

Through

La Goya

Through wide open doorways I caught sight of gaily illuminated *nacimientos*, altar-like structures, adorned with the most fantastic and incongruous assortment of trifles, which in a measure take the place of our Christmas-trees. The plaza was thronged. Happy groups squatted on the ground or sauntered about, watching the fireworks that were being discharged from a temporary stand. The exhibition was really very creditable. Even the *blasé* I found a pleasure in the flaming wheels and constellated bombs. Would you believe it, the poor creatures, who have little more than baked *camotes* to live on, spent over a thousand soles on that display?

Acquaintances greeted me everywhere, and I speedily learned that the Goya was present. Soon I came across them all, a family party, seated in a circle, gazing with the silence of a year's accumulated wonder at the blaze of sparks and fire. Yes, she was there. The moon showed me a pretty picture, truly. Round her shoulders was drawn a light scarf; flowers intensified the blackness of her heavy hair. Her face seemed very fair; her eyes were as deep as the night.

After the usual round of salutations I sat down beside her.

"How finely we are dressed to-night, Goyita."

"*Una pobre, como yo?*" she replied disparagingly.

"A poor girl like you, Goyita? That's more your fault than mine. What a fool you are not to care for me."

"Fool, indeed!" she replied with a toss of her head, "You'd never have let me come to see these fireworks."

"And since when have I had the reputation of a tyrant, *querida*? Pshaw, you might have fireworks every day if you wished. Why do you treat me so cruelly? You know that I adore you. Is it the custom of your countrywomen to reward devotion with disdain?"

And so we set to whispering. She was anxious to know if we
observed

observed Christmas in my country. She readily understood when I told her of Santa Claus and the Christmas trees and even the mistletoe, but the story of the snow puzzled her. I could only describe it to her as a feathery rain that fell and lingered, and when it was over, left the world silent and white like the desert under the moonlight.

But I knew that the wonderland of conversation would hardly take the place of the tangible delights about us, in the Goya's mind. So, accompanied by the whole family, we made the round of the dances and nacimientos. I fancy the youngster was not at all displeased at the sensation created by her appearance under the escort of the big Gringo, as they call us foreigners.

The nacimiento is a common form of Christmas celebration in all Spanish American countries. Along the side of a room, a stage is erected and covered with fancy cloth. The centre of this is so arranged as to represent the Manger with the Babe. Round about, on a setting of artificial rockwork interspersed with lakes of looking-glass and waterfalls of threads, are placed groups of plaster puppets depicting the principal Biblical scenes from the Creation to the birth of Christ. Candles light up every point. Among the poor, to whom puppets and rockwork are impossible, the ornaments are a most inappropriate assortment of dolls, toys, coloured pictures, and even playing cards.

The great street door is wide open. All are welcome to the Christmas cheer. Music and dancing are continuous, and servants move among the guests with trays laden with *copitas* of pisco, anizado and coñac. Whatever their faults, these people are never lacking in the virtue of hospitality.

At about half past eleven, the Goya and many of the other women departed to change their gay attire for more devotional garments in order that they might attend the midnight mass. I
had

had promised to meet her after the mass was over, but a sense of curiosity tempted me to join the crowds that hurried churchward at the insistent clanging of the bells in the tower.

The bare body of the building was in darkness. Huddled on the floor were all the women of the *pueblo*, hooded in their black mantas ; men filled the side aisles and the spaces around the door. There was scarcely a point of colour. The altar blazed with hundreds of candles. The priest was an imposing personage in spite of his coarse sensual face. The service was a string of unintelligible mummeries, yet it was not without dignity although the rustic trousers of the assistants that dangled beneath their laced vestments, and the nasal nondescript responses of the choir threatened momentary disillusion. There was, in a gallery, something that pretended to be an orchestra, very reedy, very noisy and very energetic. Near where I stood, an old man from time to time beat drowsy and irrelevant rattles on a small drum. Stray candles in front of special altars made heavy shadows of the pillars. Now and then a dog wandered in, searching for a lost master. The cloud of incense intensified the heat, without perceptibly diminishing the pungent human odours. Yet there was something religious in it all, if it were only the heavy drag of time. I couldn't distinguish the Goya among the kneeling figures, and the novelty of the spectacle soon wore off ; I don't know how often I adjourned to the square for a cigarette.

It must have been half past one before the mass was over. Then began a quaint ceremony, the Pastoras. A canopy was brought out and held above the priest who advanced towards the body of the church. Six little girls, dressed in white, and two boys, attired and disguised as old men, appeared before him. The piccolo of the orchestra began to shriek a ballad-tune. The little
voices

voices tried to follow while the little feet performed an awkward dance. I could catch only a few of the words :

Hermanas pastoras,
Vamos á adorar
Al recién nacido—

Shepherd sisters, let us go to worship the new born child.

Then a procession was formed which marched slowly round the church between two lines of worshippers. The singing children walked in front. The priest carried in his arms a figure of the infant Christ. When the altar was regained, he again seated himself beneath the canopy and each of the little girls repeated the song in turn, followed by a chorus of all. The scene was ended by the two boys, who during the whole ceremony had performed pantomimic buffooneries while the orchestra piped, and the little girls circled in the dance. Then the procession reformed and left the church to repeat the performance at each house in which was a nacimiento. The congregation dispersed.

I hurried to the plaza and waited. Soon the Goya came out and we all sat down on the stone benches, there in the moonlit square with its soft white walls of houses. They all clamoured for "Pascuas," Christmas presents. I sent for a bottle of anizado. I don't know why, but it was pleasant to sit there at her feet and pay her compliments which her lips pretended to misunderstand, although her eyes responded : the stilted extravagant Spanish compliments which lay tribute on all the stars and flowers in the universe, and which sound so absurd in our reserved English. Indian, savage, what you will, she was still a pretty woman, and I—I asked no more.

The bottle finished they went to bed, while I roved about
among

among the fandangos, drinking everything from beer to bitters with the same Christian goodwill. The moon was paling when I took a cup of coffee at a little Chinese stall ; in the East were the streaks of white that betokened day ; and so in the balmy morn of the equator, under much the same sky as that which shone upon its first birth, dawned Christmas ; that Christmas which, no doubt, you at the same moment were saluting with all the accessories of civilisation in an atmosphere of ennui, away in the land of snows.

I awoke about ten. The heat was numbing. It seemed as if there were nothing in life that could justify exertion. Still I remembered that her mother had asked me to breakfast, or more truthfully, I had invited myself, and I knew they would be making great preparations for me. So, followed by my boy, I crossed the river.

I found that she lives in a little addition of two rooms that adjoins her father's house ; a rambling structure of cane and mud, with a low, heavily thatched-roof, bare walls, and the naked earth for a floor. In front, faced with a half wall, which contains the door or gate, is a large covered space, surrounded by wide benches of board, which serve as beds for as many weary travellers as care to ask the hospitality of the house. Next, behind, is the living-room of the family, hung with hammocks. Upon the walls are saddles, bridles, lassos, coils of rope and raw-hide, long sword-like *machetas* for cutting cane, *alforjas*, or saddle bags woven of cotton, and all the paraphernalia of the road. In the corners stood shovels and other implements, rude tables, benches, and chairs of home manufacture ; boxes for clothing and stores filled up the intervening spaces. To the rear of the apartment opened bedrooms and passages that led to kitchens and enclosures. To the left of the main building, with a door of its own in front, was the sanctuary of the Goya.

I was

I was received with great cordiality, a spontaneous kindness mingled with respect, such as you would never find among a similar class in Europe. Her father is a Serrano, an Indian of the mountains. Like many of those people, he wears his hair closely cropped, with the exception of a wide shock in front that hangs like a thick fringe over his forehead. Besides cultivating his gardens, he carries on a trade with the interior, whence he brings back *dulces* and *chancaca*—a paste of raw sugar. The *dulces* are conserves of fruits and sugar similar to Guava jelly, and almost sickeningly sweet. The people are very fond of them.

If the Goya's mother ever possessed any of her daughter's beauty she must have lost it long ago, for no trace of it remains. But what she lacks in grace she makes up in virtue, for she is the jolliest, happiest, most gossipy old dame I have met for many a day. She has several children, all of whom, with the exception of a young sister, are older than the Goya.

They gave me a great feast at which I sat alone, while all the rest waited upon me. The Goya was very quiet; she seemed to be watching me intently, as if she were trying to penetrate the screen of manners and compliments to discover the real effect of their efforts to please me. All through the afternoon, even until I left, she kept up her pondering. I wish I knew what her final impression was. It would be interesting to know just what was going on in that little brain, which is separated from mine by all the forces of the universe save that of human sympathy. And, after all, what is it that we are always seeking up and down the world but that one quality that knows no law of intellect, race, or station?

Well, such was my Christmas. It might fairly be called a merry one. I trust yours was no worse.

January.

January.

My Christmas visit was not thrown away, for the Goya is mine! Taking advantage of the festival of Los Reyes, or Twelfth Night, which is observed here as in all Catholic countries, I sent the Goya a present and a letter, of which the ardour was not all insincere. She returned a quaint answer to my prayers: "Perhaps what I asked might happen, perhaps it might never be." But this was foundation enough for my old oracle Juan to declare the omens favourable. So, having despatched a messenger ahead to announce our coming, he and I set out with our saddle bags stuffed with the elements of a grand supper. It was dark when we reached the house. The Goya came to meet us as we dismounted and, for the first time, she shyly, but unresistingly, allowed me to kiss her. A table was prepared for me in one corner, where I supped, attended by my lady love. Juan, in his element, presided at the spread which loaded the great table. Amid the general mirth we two were forgotten.

It was a gorgeous scene that met my eyes next morning, dreamy as my own lazy mood, as I lay smoking in the hammock of her sitting-room, looking out through the open door. The house has a beautiful situation on a high, sandy eminence, overlooking the spreading, winding valley of the river, which is shut in by steep water-scored cliffs that mark the limits of the desert. Below, quivering in the glaring light, a thousand shades of green, dimmed by the hazy smoke of charcoal fires, mingled with the golden flashes of the river. Waving clumps of palm hedged in the darker stretches of cotton plantations. Feathery algarroba woods held in their clearings the brighter greens of gardens and banana groves. Far away inland rose the first hills of the Andes,

so faintly seen they seemed a part of the cloudless sky itself. At the foot of the slope the sun shone on little patches of colour, where women were washing clothes in the water. Near by, making its pendulum-like voyages from shore to shore, was the long dug-out canoe of the ferry by which I had crossed the night before. There is no ford, and horses and mules have to be towed, swimming behind the little craft to the accompaniment of ceaseless shouts and splashing. At the landing-places bustling groups were busy unsaddling and resaddling. The bright dresses of the women beneath their black mantas, the ponchos and white hats of the men, the gay saddle cloths spread on the sand, and the many coloured alforjas thrown together in heaps, looked in the distance like an old-fashioned nosegay. With a chorus of laughter, some boys were swimming; as they rested for a moment in the shallows, the sun lit up their dark wet bodies with a glitter of bronze. Over all the landscape hung the gauzy curtains of the heat-waves—just like the dissolving tableaux in a pantomime.

The light grew blinding, and with a wide swing of the hammock, I kicked the door half shut. She had left me after serving my coffee, turning her head as she passed the threshold to whisper the assurance that she would come back soon again. Certainly she is different from the rest of them. I looked round the room. She has managed to give an individuality even to it. The dull walls were not to her fancy, it seemed, for she had endeavoured to hide them under strips of coloured paper and pictures of every sort, from the roughest woodcuts of a newspaper, to the gaudy circulars of patent medicines. She had even secured a yard or two of real wall-paper somewhere, and had spent much pains in distributing it to advantage. On the floor she had spread here and there an empty sack in the manner of a rug. Under a tiny but most unflattering mirror at one end of the chamber, stood her
table

table with her sewing machine and work, an earthen water cooler, a little clock that seemed to have forgotten that its principal purpose in life was to note the flight of time ; a box and a trinket or two, all in the daintiest order ; while in the centre rose the greatest of all her treasures, a huge glass lamp, which she had lighted with great ceremony on my arrival the previous evening.

Ere long she returned, radiant from her bath, and took a seat on a small stool near me. She wore a simple gown, open at the throat ; around the polished ebony of her hair she had tied a bright red ribbon, which secured a single flower. In her eyes still lingered the languor of passion. I had never before realised how beautiful she was. She held up her seductive mouth provokingly, but as I rose to kiss her she drew back quickly, and placing her little tapered hand upon her lips, laughed at me roguishly with her dark eyes. The Goyita needs no flatterer to tell her of her charms ; she knows them only too well.

The day flew by as if the hours were minutes. I soon found out her weakness, and I told her stories of my own country ; of balls, and jewels, and flowers ; of pretty women and gay dresses, and of all the pageants I could remember ; she listened as a child to a fairy tale. At the noontide breakfast she had still another fascination in store for me. From the depths of her clothes-chest she brought out her four silver spoons, and from a cupboard on the wall, her plates with the flowered border. She waited upon me with thoughtful attentions, that might have flattered a prince. The instinct of service resisted all my coaxings, however ; she did not know me well enough yet to sit at the table beside me.

In the evening, hand in hand, we wandered through the chacras by the river, past hedges of tangled vines and flowers, and under the rustling fronds of the banana trees. I told her I wanted to build her a house near that of old Juan, in a quebrada
some

some miles from my own habitation. She slowly shook her head.

"You will not come? What nonsense; you don't know how happy you will be; I will give you everything you can think of."

"Oh, no, no, no; not that!"

"Why not?"

"Oh, I know what it means. After I have given you all the love of my heart and soul, you will go away to your own country, and I shall never be able to love again."

"And do you want to love again?" I asked, coldly.

She paused, and looked at me for a moment, then threw her arms about my neck, and kissed me in savage abandonment.

Still, I could not shake her resolution.

"Here, yes, for ever and for ever, if you will; this has always been my home, and if you leave me I shall still have known no other. But there, no. If, after I had become accustomed to a life with you, you should deceive me, how could I come back, and ever be happy here again?"

"But, Goyita mia," I declared, "I have no intention of returning to my home."

"Would you think of me when the occasion came?" she replied, as sadly as if she had already fathomed woman's fate.

But I must stop writing. I am sick for sleep. It was two this morning when I started back. The long ride through the desert, under the voluptuous moon that drew across it the light bars of cloud, as a woman in the shame of her passion throws her white arm over her eyes; the long, long ride, in which my thoughts flew back, false to my latest love, to the old, old life, and the days that are no more. To you, the whole adventure may appear a disgrace to my intelligence; yet it was not all debased; it had much of beauty. A hundred miles for a woman! and
that

that a woman three hundred years behind the world I once knew—yet I mention it. Well, it was worth the telling, if you are not so bound up in your century that you can see nothing human outside of it.

March.

Again and again I visited the Goya; she never wearied me. She had learned the secret many a more brilliant woman has failed to discover, she never let me feel sure. I could not induce her to consent to leave her father's house—she seemed to have a vague fear of such a change. I was beginning to despair. I consulted old Juan.

"Patron," said this authority, "order the house to be built at once; send me the men, and I will attend to it for you. Don't fear, she will come as soon as it is finished. I know these women; their no always means yes. But I am afraid you are spoiling her. When you are wooing a woman, it is all very well to promise her everything; that is part of the game. But once she has yielded she is yours and she has to obey you—if she doesn't, beat her. Never beg a woman to do anything, just tell her she must do it. Let her always see that you are in authority; that is the only attitude she will understand. Patron mio, you know perfectly well that you cannot ride a mule without your spurs, and there isn't much difference between women and mules."

If I did not quite share Juan's philosophy, I nevertheless accepted his advice—I ordered the house to be built and said nothing to the Goya about it.

Meanwhile the carnival arrived, and Manuel, Francisco and I went to Amotape to celebrate it. I think that of all their festivals, the natives enjoy this one most. Indeed the enthusiasm pervades

pervades every class, even to the aristocratic Spaniards of the large cities. All formality is set aside and good-natured licence reigns. The Indians inaugurate the sports several days before the carnival really begins. With their pockets full of red, green and blue powders, egg shells filled with coloured water, and *chisquetes* or squirts charged with eau-de-cologne, the men go from house to house and attack all the women of the family with this holiday ammunition. With screams and laughter, the fire is vigorously returned; pretty faces are streaked with powder, and clothes are drenched with the coloured waters until both sides are tired out.

We arrived on Shrove Tuesday, the last day of the feast when the fun is at its height. I found the Goya sadly disarrayed but glowing with enjoyment. She was so disappointed when I declined to join in the sport that to appease her I had to submit to having my face daintily smeared with a powder puff. I was then permitted to become a spectator, while she and my two companions gave themselves up to the spirit of the day. The Goya was the leader of the girls against Manuel and Francisco. These two enthusiasts fully armed for the fray sped down the village street in pursuit of the first maiden who showed herself—perhaps to be met at the next corner or doorway by an ambushed volley that brought them to a standstill or forced them into ignominious retreat. Showers of water were poured from balconies and windows. The wetter and dirtier they became, the happier they seemed to be. The Goya was breathless with laughter. Her stratagems were masterly, and during the entire afternoon she outwitted the enemy at every point.

At nightfall, I was host at a grand dinner at the Chinese Fonda, to which I invited all her friends. Here new pranks suggested themselves, and the scene became so hilarious that even I had to yield, much to the detriment of my raiment if not of my

dignity. One cannot be Anglo-Saxon in such surroundings. Finally, having exhausted our powders and ourselves as well, we gave up the sport.

Some weeks later I had occasion to go to Payta, the principal seaport of this region, a wretched dirty little town that clusters along the base of the wrinkled cliffs like an eruption of toadstools under an ant hill, and quite as brown and ugly. My road led past the Goya's house. She was seated on the floor, cutting out a dress, but on seeing me she bundled the work into a heap and jumped up clapping her hands.

"I am so glad you have come," she cried, "I was just going to send you a message to tell you of the grand fiesta that will take place at La Huaca on Saturday, and to beg you to take me. You will, won't you?"

"I am very sorry, my Goya, but it is impossible. I am going to Payta, and I cannot return before Sunday morning."

Her face fell, for to her gay little soul a fiesta was the breath of life. She was silent for a moment, then she looked at me beseechingly.

"But everybody is going, Señor; may not my mother take me?"

The Goya knew as well as I did that it was impossible to concede such a request. For my young bride to appear at a fandango under any other escort than that of her lord and master would have elevated the eyebrows of the world to an alarming height. Her spirits rose again, however, when I spoke of presents from Payta.

I returned on the promised morning, but much to my amazement I found the house locked up. Where could the family be? My boy descried some people down in the chacras. I told him to go and see who they were and ask them where the Goya was.

The

The boy returned. "It is her mother, Señor."

"What does she say?"

"She says the Doña Goya went to La Huaca yesterday with some friends and will not return till to-morrow. The mother is coming up to speak to you."

I could hardly believe my ears.

"What nonsense you are talking," I said indignantly; "such a thing is impossible."

"Yes, Señor," he answered, "it is strange, but a Señora in the house behind there told me to ask you to wait for a moment; she has a letter for you from the Doña Goya."

"The devil! Why didn't she say so before?"

"Who knows, Señor?"

So I waited, but no Señora with a letter appeared.

At length the Goya's mother came, and as she unlocked the door, greeted me with the customary salutations that must precede all conversation however important. I returned them impatiently.

"Where is the Goya?" I demanded.

"In La Huaca, Señor."

"What on earth possessed you to allow her to go?"

"Who knows, Señor?" she replied with exasperating meekness.

"Where is the letter she left for me?"

"She left no letter, Señor."

"What's the use of telling me that? Boy, go and call that woman who spoke to you."

"Señor," answered the youth, "she is in this very house."

"Where?" I shouted, growing more angry as I grew more perplexed at every reply.

"In that room behind, Señor. She spoke to me through the cane wall."

I turned

I turned to the mother. "What trick is this?" I cried, and brushing past her, I rushed through the passages to the rooms beyond. In one of these I discovered the Goya sitting serenely.

"What do you mean by this, Goya?" I said sternly.

"Oh, I knew you were there all the time."

"Why didn't you let me in, then?"

"I wanted to see what you would say."

"When did you return from La Huaca?"

"Of course I never went," and she mockingly held up her lips.

She had planned the whole performance just to tease me. The part played by her mother was no doubt one that pleased her. These Indians can lie to your face with more innocent composure and ingenuity than any race I ever met.

I thought, with a view to my own future comfort, that I might as well draw the Goya's attention to what might have been the consequences of her joke.

"Supposing I had grown angry and had gone away?" I asked her.

"Do you think I should have let you go far? I should have called you."

"Yes; but I might have been so angry that I would have refused to listen," I suggested as haughtily as I could.

"I wasn't afraid of that," she returned archly, and I had to give up, although I still pretended to feel hurt.

The room in which I had found her faced upon the open *patio*. She made me sit down beside her in the shadow of the wall. Opposite to us, on a high perch out of the reach of scratching fowls, in a composite *jardinière* of old boxes and broken water-jars, grew the flowers with which she was accustomed to deck her hair. A light roof of thatch over one corner of the enclosure formed the kitchen, where, squatted upon the ground before a fireplace of
four

four stones, her mother was preparing my breakfast with an unpretentious equipment of earthen pots, wooden spoons, and her own dexterous fingers. A fastidious man might have found the sight of such preparations trying to his appetite; but I had proved the pudding too often by the eating to quarrel with the making of it. Hot *tamales*, rice stained red with powdered *achote*, and beef stewed in a *salsa picante* with *aji*, made a breakfast which I was far from despising, especially as the Goya, perhaps to atone for her cruelty, was more graceful than ever in her attentions.

After breakfast was over, I resolved to put to the proof a portion at least of old Juan's philosophy of femininity. During the weeks that had passed, we had completed and furnished the house. So in a matter-of-course way I announced to the Goya that it was finished, and that I intended to send for her shortly. She looked at me in amazement, seemingly more astounded by the way in which I spoke than by the news I related. Hitherto my manner towards her had always been beseeching. The expression of her face amused me quite as much as the altered tone I had just assumed had surprised her. I nearly spoiled everything by laughing and catching her in my arms to assure her that I had not meant the dictatorial part of it at all. Fortunately I resisted the temptation.

She ventured to demur.

"No, no; I cannot, I cannot. Who knows how soon you will go back to your own land? You must go some day. Do you think it makes it easier to tell me it will not be for years and years? The time will come, and how could I bear it?"

"Now, Goya," I said, as severely as I was able, "it is both useless and silly to talk to me in that way. I have made up my mind, and there's an end of the matter. You seem to have a very strange notion of a woman's duty."

She

She sat for some time toying nervously with her dress. Suddenly she looked up eagerly.

"Then tell me about the house."

I didn't hesitate to describe it. As much for my own comfort as for hers, I had sent to Lima for the furniture, and I knew that to her the place would seem palatial.

I told her that it was in the quebrada, close to Juan's house, that she might have his daughters for companions, in addition to the old woman who was to cook for her and wait upon her. There were three rooms and a kitchen; a bedroom, a dining-room, and a little sitting-room for herself. There was a real bed, with a mosquito-net instead of the print curtains to which she was accustomed; moreover, there were rugs on the floors. The dining-room had everything imaginable. But her own little room was the gem of all. There were pictures on the walls, there was a stand for her sewing-machine, and I had ordered a box full of materials for dresses that it would take her for ever to make up. Then, on one side, there was a little dressing-table, with brushes and combs and everything she could wish, and over it hung a great, big mirror, in which she could see not merely her pretty face, but the whole of herself at once.

Her eyes were sparkling.

"When will you send for me?"

"As soon as I go back."

She threw her arms around me and nestled her head on my shoulder.

"But it will be soon, soon, soon, won't it?" she implored.

I had succeeded beyond my hopes. Yet, somewhat at the expense of my vanity, for it was clearly the house, and not I, that had overcome her reluctance.

A few days ago, a small caravan of peons, marshalled by Juan, escorted

escorted her to her new abode. Although he had ridden all night, the devoted fellow came over early in the morning to tell me of her safe arrival, and as soon as I could I galloped away to welcome her.

I found her alone, seated at the table in her sitting-room, amusing herself by feeding a clamorous young blackbird, which one of Juan's daughters had just given her. Owing to the heat she had thrown off her bodice, and her breast was but lightly covered by the snowy white sleeveless chemise of her people. In her hair-ribbon she had tucked the familiar red flower, while around her neck she wore a little chain with a golden medallion of her patron saint which I had given her. I shall never forget the picture she made, as in a half-embarrassed way she turned her head over her shoulder to look at me, as I paused for a moment on the threshold to watch her.

She did not say very much about the house. She was quiet, perhaps a little tired; but I could see she was content. And so my new domestic life has begun.

April.

Perhaps it is the strangeness and half romance of this new life that most delight me. There is the gallop across the desert in the splendour of the sunset or in the moonlight to the little suppers at which she has learned to preside with so much dignity, while she tells me, with the greatest seriousness, all the trifles of the day—so diffidently, so appealingly. Then the early ride, brightened by the nameless colours of morning, while the magic kiss of the princely sun is warming and waking the sleeping beauty of the night; the still valley with its little river; the stunted feathery trees where the white herons perch as in the pictures on a fan; the blue hills, the desert, and at last the
flashing

flashing sea. It's all well worth the trouble—will it soon begin to pall, I wonder? But why let the demon of doubt and distrust come to rob our sunshine of its sparkle?

Since she became established as sole mistress of the mansion, the Goya's whole manner has changed. A new feeling of responsibility seems to have taken hold of her, and she has abandoned her old waywardness for a quaintly subdued and matronly air. When from my silence she probably fancies my thoughts are far away, I often lie in the hammock and watch her flutter through the tiny apartments busy with endless arranging and rearranging. Nothing pleases her so much as when I praise her housekeeping. Even her utter ignorance is a pleasure; it is part of her nature. It is only the vast contrast between us that makes the illusion possible.

Sometimes on Sunday Manuel and Francisco come over as our guests. In the quebrada, near the water, the algarroba trees grow into heavy woods, with clear shaded aisles among the gnarled trunks. There we all go, accompanied by Juan's daughters—two jolly little companions who chatter incessantly, sometimes with an unconscious latitude that might startle a French novelist. All things are natural to them; they are like the birds that chirp above us, to which love has but one meaning.

In a quaint, high-pitched key the three girls sing us the love songs of their race: of hard hearts and broken vows, disdainful ladies and neglectful swains, and of kisses and longings and tears. Then they teach me the names of the animals and flowers, or, tired of lessons, try to guess the words that fit into the notes of the birds.

They tell us in awed voices of the *animas* or ghosts that make the strange noises of the night—a class of spirit that seems to be
more

more sprite than spectre. They have many stories also of the witches who have power to trace thieves and reveal the hiding-place of things that have been stolen.

At noon our boys arrive with alforjas and hampers, and we breakfast together in a circle on the ground. It is amusing to see the deferential way in which the Goya is treated by the two girls and the boys. Although she is of their people and kin, her relations with me seem to have exalted her in their eyes. This voluntary recognition of the superiority of the white race is one of the most marked characteristics of these Indians.

The algarroba woods are full of wild pigeons. Toward evening, as they fly to the river for water, my two friends and I take our guns, and skirting along the bank enjoy an hour or two of sport.

We made a gala day of Easter. On the southern side of Cape Blanco, which is one of the most westerly points of the Continent, the sea in some past age burrowed great caves and arches in the cliff. One of these caverns, into the mouth of which the surf still dashes when the tide is high, winds in a labyrinth for many hundred feet to the very heart of the rock. The other cave, now remote from the waves, is a great circular dome almost two hundred feet in diameter. These imposing dimensions are magnified by the insignificant passage that forms the entrance. Many mysterious stories of buried treasure are told about it. Some say that after the murder of their Emperor Atahualpa by the Spaniards, the Inca priests used this huge natural vault as a secret depository for the rich and sacred ornaments of their temples. Others relate how the English pirates found it a safe place of concealment for the superabundant wealth gained from the Panama galleys; and in confirmation of this story there is a legend that on every Easter morning a great white brig sails bravely

bravely away from the cave's mouth, and no one ever sees her return. It was to verify, if possible, this wild tale of the phantom brig that we planned an expedition for Easter. It was arranged that Juan should take the Goya and his daughters to the Cape at daybreak, when we would ride over to meet them. Unfortunately we were not so prompt in starting, and day had well begun before we set out, so we missed the sailing of the pirate, much to our disappointment. But such a morning was a charm against all regrets. The cliffs were in heavy shadow as we rode along the sand. Although the breeze was cool, the sun kept us warm. The sky and its light clouds were of faintest tints, and the sea had that intense blue which sets off to such advantage the dazzling white of the breakers. As the tide was ebbing thousands of red crabs skirmished like cavalry troops along the beach. Solitary frigate birds hovered aloft, manœuvring lines of pelicans skimmed the surf, and dusky groups of vultures squabbled over derelict scraps. The sails of three or four little fishing-boats sparkled in the still slanting light. The very soul of freedom enfolded this sun-loved land of brown and azure.

We found them all awaiting us in their usual resigned and uncomplaining way. It is instinctive in these people to regard our pleasure as theirs. Old Juan's pride would have received a severe shock had one of his daughters, or even the Goya, ventured to reproach us for being two hours behind our tryst. Their chief wonder, which Juan more than half shared, was that they who had arrived in time had failed to see the phantom. I have some doubts myself whether the old fellow really reached the place before the sun had come to remove all uncanny suggestions.

While the old man and our boys were looking after the animals and preparing our breakfast, we lighted our candles and took the girls off to explore the twisting galleries of the seaward cave.

They

They followed us in awed silence as we went deeper and deeper into the darkness. Something besides the damp chill air made them shiver and clutch our hands convulsively. The noise of the surf came faintly to us, although we could feel the great walls pulse to its beating. More than shadows seemed to lurk in the roof and crannies. I think we all felt a sudden shudder as Manuel playfully uttered a scream that was answered to us again and again as if the old pirates were rallying to the alarm. The sand of the floor was heavy with dampness. The walls and the roof crowded closer and closer upon us ; we went on crouching almost to the ground. Finally only a low black tunnel confronted us—there our courage gave out, and we hurried back to the daylight, hearing in our own footfalls the sounds of ghostly pursuit. As we stood under the great arch of the entrance watching the surf about the rocks, the girls grew very brave again.

Old Juan laughed contemptuously when they told him of their terrors, but he didn't attempt any explorations on his own account. As it was too early for breakfast, we three men decided to take a bath in the sea. I was well in the lead, just as we were making for the third line of breakers, when a frantic shout from the shore reached me. Turning my head I saw old Juan and the rest running up and down the beach screaming and gesticulating. Some were beckoning us to return ; others were pointing seaward in evident alarm. I looked ahead, and there just beyond the great white line that was subsiding before me moved the slowly swaying fin of a monster shark. I confess that for a moment my heart stood still. We must all have caught sight of the danger at the same moment, for without a word we turned : there certainly was excitement in the breathless scurry for the shore, where the Goya quite forgot to be dignified in her joy at our safe return.

After

After breakfast we entered the cave of the great dome. Ages must have elapsed since the sea seethed round its walls, for the floor was dry and thickly covered with powdered saltpetre that had crystallised on the roof above, and fallen flake by flake. In the centre rose a great pile of rock which the waves had once tumbled together. Signs of hurried excavation in the sand at one side of the vault showed that the tradition of the treasure had gained one believer at least. On examining the hole I was surprised to find portions of human bones rapidly crumbling to dust. This reminded Juan that many years before, some men had come in search of the buried wealth, but they had only unearthed a few old skeletons and a little golden ornament in the shape of a fish. Perhaps the bones had frightened the diggers away. The cavern must have been an ancient burial place; the twilight and the silence and the far off murmur of the sea were a fitting atmosphere for a tomb.

Then the Goya remembered that all along the foot of the cliffs in the valley of her old home, many graves of the *antiguos* had been found filled with strangely formed pieces of pottery called *huacos*. To these places the natives were accustomed to repair on Good Friday to dig. From the way she spoke it was evident that these huacoings or grave opening parties were a popular form of amusement on the holiday in question.

“But why do they dig only on Good Friday, Goya?” I asked her.

“Señor, do you not know that the pottery is enchanted? During all the rest of the year it sinks deep down into the ground, and it is impossible to find it, but on Good Friday it comes near to the surface again. Besides the pottery, there are sometimes little things of gold and silver, and sometimes coral beads. A man once gave my sister a necklace of these which she wears as a charm against chill.”

This

This account of the old graves excited my curiosity, and rather than wait a year till the lucky day comes again, I have resolved to risk the spells and do some unorthodox excavating. Often in riding to Amotape I have noticed along the road on the desert a long double row of mounds covered with white shells, and regularly placed as if to line a royal avenue. This avenue which has an artificial appearance is wide and straight for several miles, and may have formed a portion of the lost Inca highway along the coast. About Amotape also, the Goya says, there are many adobe ruins of aboriginal temples or forts. At the first opportunity I have, I shall visit these places, and unless the enchantments prevail against me I may soon be able to tell you of something more novel than love making.

We were all so absorbed in our antiquarian discussions that we would have forgotten the present entirely had not Juan brought us back to realities by telling us that the tide was rising fast, and we would not have time to pass the rocks of one of the cliffs unless we set off at once. As their road lay inland while ours was along the beach, we hurriedly bade our little friends good-bye, and so the holiday ended.

May.

The Goya has suddenly conceived a great fondness for all her relatives, in the hacienda and beyond it, and she is constantly begging to be allowed to make them brief visits under the guardianship of her old Dueña. I very much fear, however, that her vanity is deeper than her affection in most cases, for she dearly loves the wonder and envy that her little fineries evoke. Dressed in the riding habit she has so quickly learned to wear, she is becoming a very superior young person with her guide and her attendant. Her joy is complete whenever I find time to ride out to accompany her home.

These

These relationships of hers extend far beyond the common confines of blood. She has sisters and cousins and aunts in abundance, but in addition to these, almost every tenant on the estate is in some way or other related to her spiritually. This is the result of the ceremonies with which her religion has surrounded her life. She has of course a godfather and a godmother. On two occasions she herself has stood sponsor and thereby gained a pair of *comadres* and *compadres* with whom she is spiritually co-parent of the children. Among the Indians this relationship is in many cases accounted superior to the ties of kindred; moreover there are her *compañeros*, the men who were godfathers when she was godmother, and so on through infinite shadings. Occasionally my journeys in search of her ladyship bring me into strange adventures. The dark lonely night rides! What glories are in the depths of that star-sown sky, what sounds rush on the breeze! What heart-spurring shadows lurk among the sand heaps as I gallop along the treacherous line of the trail. Even I whose brain has little room for spectral fears can recognise the fatherland of ghosts and goblins. Darkness, solitude, and silence, the playground of fancies; it was amid such scenes that man first learned to shudder. Even in the moonlight when drowsiness comes on, a weirdness fills the world. I've sat up in the saddle with a start to see a herd of cattle rushing before me as noiselessly as shadows—only some desert shrubs. Then a great fantastic mottled monster has writhed across the path in desperate fashion—a patch of sand tufted with waving grass. The night birds sing a fiendish song that rattles down the wind like spirit laughter. Often and often I've put my hand on my revolver to find that I had jumped at a thorn bush.

Not long since, the Goya's whims took her to a remote part of the estate. I had promised to bring her back. As I had never
been

been to the place where she was visiting I asked old Juan to go with me. Poor fellow, he isn't much of a guide on unfamiliar roads, at night as his eyesight is failing. In the quebrada where the trail we should have taken separates from the main road, we missed the way and were obliged to ride up the ravine to the house of a tenant in search of a guide. While the man was getting ready I chatted with his wife.

"Where are you going?" she asked me. In this country no honest traveller should resent such a question. I felt in a mood for romancing.

"We are going to a witch's dance at the salt marshes."

"What!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. One night Juan and I were returning from Amotape; suddenly near the marshes we heard strange music; in the distance were fantastic lights; on reaching the place what did we find? a fandango of the Brujas."

"Ave Maria!" I could almost see the woman's flesh creep.

"Yes, the Brujas. We joined them. They gave us strange liquors. At dawn they all vanished, but before they left they told us that on every dark Saturday night they held a rout. So now we are going again. The women were very beautiful."

Luckily the guide appeared at this moment, or the poor woman would have fainted. She must have said many a prayer that night to save her husband from the witches' spell. I suppose the joke was heartless, but then most jokes are.

Rocky stretches and sandy hollows, gallop, gallop, gallop. We arrived about ten o'clock.

There was a long building with a great veranda that opened upon a corral. The veranda was lighted up, and as we approached I heard those sounds of revelry by night that betoken a fandango. A large crowd filled the benches and listened to a wheezy strident concertina.

concertina. The Goya ran out to meet us, as I got off my horse and looked about. Something unusual was going on certainly. Upon a table draped with cloth at the far end of the veranda, a small open coffin with the body of a baby stood set on end, against a background of flaring red and white calico; the lid painted black with a double white cross rested at one side. In front flickered two candles stuck in old beer bottles. The Goya told me that I was at the funeral of her hostess's child. As we entered, the bereaved mother came forward and greeted me with a smile. She received my expressions of sympathy as if they were something foreign to the occasion. Some of the women, led by the Dueña, gathered round the Goya and whispered to her, giggling; but they hastened away as soon as the music called for a dance. I sat apart with the Goya to watch.

And what a scene! There amid its gaudy trappings, glancing back the flame of the sputtering candles, stood an enshrouded mystery. In a little box of blackened wood was all life knows of life; a ghastly nothingness; a thing of terror yet of fascination, a question and an answer both in one! And around it, shouting in a drunken dance, with laughter and ribald song, moved creatures whom it was almost flattery to call savages. The living seemed to be carousing over the dead like cannibals about a boiling cauldron. The Goya's chatter was unheeded as I sat there looking on, indifferent. Did not disgust sicken me, horror choke me, loathing overpower me? No; just one feeling stirred me, the feeblest our soul can know, the indolent supercilious curiosity of a woman's uplifted lorgnettes. I seemed dead to every civilised prejudice I had ever possessed.

But when the dance ended a vague sense of annoyance took possession of me. Hurriedly telling the Goya to prepare at once for her return, I ordered Juan to get the animals ready. While I waited

waited by the gate on horseback some women and men passed in. Suddenly the music grew weird and mournful. I heard the sound of lamentation, and looked toward the veranda. In front of the little coffin were collected all the women who had just arrived, and all those who had been present before. They were rocking their bodies to and fro, and wailing and mourning, while the men sat calmly talking and drinking on the benches.

"What are they doing, Juan?" I asked.

"Weeping for the dead, Señor."

"Is it the custom of your people?"

The old man seemed to feel, from something in my manner, that I was not entirely in sympathy with the scene.

"Only among the people of the Campo, patron, when their children die," he answered.

"And the dancing and the drinking?"

"Yes, that too; they weep a while, then dance and drink again."

"All night?"

"Oh, yes; sometimes for two or three days."

I laughed. The girl returned. What was this thing called death? Bah! Who cared? And under its very eyes I carried her away. It was life that I had come for.

Without a word we hurried through the night.

June.

I have been riding all the afternoon along the edge of the Tablaza, where a maze of fantastic quebradas runs riot to the shore. A desert of greys and browns and dying greens below, a silvery film over a golden bowl above. Sometimes, on crossing a ridge, we caught sight of the busy sea, where the waves rushed along like a hunting pack; on its far horizon low clouds lay in

shadowless mountain ranges—the unreachable land of our dreams, the dwelling-place of happiness, the vague valleys where grows that sweetest of flowers, content. A typical Peruvian day framed in a sky of golden blue, whose threads of cloud are like the wires in a cloisonné vase.

But in Peru we never think of talking about the weather, for it is always the same.

You may remember that, during our Easter picnic to the caves, the Goya's story of the ancient graves near her old home made me anxious to explore in that neighbourhood. Recently I made a little expedition which yielded me rare booty.

There are vast aboriginal burial grounds all along the coast, but of course I can speak only of the small tract on the north bank of the Chira River, between Amotape and the sea. Here great walls of cliff, wrinkled deep by centuries of rain, ward off the desert from the valley's fertility. Every slope along the base of these cliffs is the grave of thousands, perhaps millions, of a race whose very name is forgotten. I say of a race, but there are many indications that not one, but many races are buried there. Almost all these slopes are artificially sprinkled with small white shells; shreds of pottery litter the ground, ruins of old adobe temples and pyramids rise from the plain; remains of ancient walls and buildings crown every elevation. Was ever the home of the dead more fitly placed? In front, the rich rank greens of the river, like the teeming years of life; behind, the trackless waste like the meaningless stretch of eternity. They rest where they fell, those nameless dead, on the dividing line of that grim antithesis. Or, in a simpler human sense, what pathos there is in the solicitude that laid them, composed for their long sleep, in those little silent valleys, which the bend of a quebrada has encircled with guardian hills, and where loneliness and desolation and immutability warn off

off the noisy restless world. There is a tragedy in a faith like theirs that checks a cynic's sneers. But our love of novelty, our cruel curiosity, knows no reverence. Let's go a-huacoing.

Though all the slopes undoubtedly contain graves, all are not equally rich. In many places the rains have soaked the soil, consumed the bones, and packed the earth until it has crushed and broken the pottery. But suppose we have lighted upon a favourable site. On top, the sand is mingled with little white shells. About two feet from the surface we are sure to come upon a child's grave. If the drainage of the slope kept out the water, we will find the little skeleton complete, wrapped in clothes as good as if they had been made yesterday. Seemingly the children counted for little in that old time: a sleeveless shirt, a string of coral beads, and a coarse shroud, were enough to fit the poor wee body for its cradle in the sands. It needed no pottery, but sometimes a small stick was placed beside it, perhaps as a charm, perhaps as a plaything. So unimportant was its burial, that its grave was always made in some part of the field already used for its elders; for if we dig several feet below these small bundles of bones—we meet with the carefully built tombs of adults. These are cavities hollowed in the tough sand or clay, and topped with great flat stones and adobes to support the earth above. Within these holes the body, swathed in many shrouds, was placed upon its back, instead of being trussed up in sitting posture, as is usual in other parts of Peru. Arranged about the feet of the mummy are several coarse cooking pots, still full of the provisions of corn and beans and meat that were to nourish the departed on his long, mysterious journey. Near the hands, in the case of men, lie bundles of copper and stone tools, wooden weapons, shovels and walking staves—with handles skilfully carved into human or animal shapes. Beside the women, are all their weaving and spinning

spinning utensils and gourd work-boxes filled with shuttles, spindles, and balls of thread. Sometimes there are also water-bottles, with graceful curves, and netted travelling bags containing extra clothing. It is always at the head of the body that we find the fanciful pieces of pottery known as *huacos*. They are of infinite variety : I have never seen two exactly alike. Some are round, long-necked vases, surmounted by very natural figures of birds and animals. Every vegetable is imitated ; there are gourds, melons, bananas, and other fruits ; there are clusters of eggs ; there are jars shaped like fish and alligators, and there are conventional forms, with double handles and double spouts, all of the finest burnt clay, some black, some red. The old potters evidently believed that shrill noises were efficacious in warning off evil spirits, for they often made these *huacos* with two bodies connected by a tube ; one body held the spout while an opening in the other, concealed by a grotesque monkey or bird, was so contrived as to emit a sharp whistle when the jar was being filled.

As the mummy within the shroud is usually well preserved, except that the eyes and nose are sunken, it is clear that some process of embalming was employed. Unfortunately the preparations used for this purpose have destroyed the fabrics that came in contact with them ; still enough of the inner wrappings and of the clothing remains to enable us to form some idea of the general attire. Evidently great pains were taken in arraying the dead one in the richest garments possible. A turban of finely-woven cotton or gaily-coloured tapestry was wound around the head. The men wore white tunics embroidered with flowers and figures ; the women had a more ample flowing dress of brown or blue or white, usually without ornamentation of needle work, and bound at the waist with a long fine scarf or sash. The quality of the
garments

garments varies greatly, probably with the wealth and station of the deceased. Men and women alike were adorned with necklaces and bracelets of coral beads and rings of gold—sometimes the women have wooden earrings inlaid with coral and mother-of-pearl ; often the arms have traces of tattooing.

I can't tell you how many of these graves I opened ; we dug for several days from the first light until sunset. It was hard work for the men in the hot, dusty sand under the fierce sun.

The Goya had begged hard to be allowed to join the expedition and, as she had relatives in the village where I made my headquarters, I had taken her with me. Every day about noon she and some of the women came to seek us with *alforjas* full of provisions for our lunch. They took a great interest in the antique wonders I was unearthing.

Most of the women know how to weave and spin, but their skill is inferior to that of the ancients ; for to-day they cannot produce anything equal in fineness and beauty to the fabrics and tapestries I found in the graves. The bundles of weaving tools, therefore, which are identical in form with those used to-day, though far superior in finish, aroused their envy, and I had to resist many a prayer for presents. They clamoured especially for the *orquetas*, used to hold the "copo," or roll of carded cotton, while spinning. The *orqueta* is a long crotched stick, sharpened at one end that it may be stuck into the ground. To-day a natural fork is taken from a tree for this purpose, but the *orquetas* of the graves were cut out of solid wood, and beautifully carved and polished.

All the Indian women are in the habit of plaiting thick skeins of brown spun cotton into the braids of their hair to prevent the ends from splitting, and it astonished the Goya and her friends greatly to learn from the skeins we found packed in little gourd toilet

toilet boxes, that the custom had come down to them from so remote a time.

There is a certain vein of sentiment in these women that is entirely human, and once they burst into a chorus of sympathetic ejaculations, when, on opening a mummy, I picked from among the wrappings a tress of hair carefully tied with a coloured string. Some lover, they were sure, had placed it there as a pledge of undying remembrance. For half an hour they discussed the incident pityingly, and during the whole evening I heard them relate it to each acquaintance who came. Trifles make up their lives.

One custom which the graves revealed, however, puzzled them as much as it did me. Protruding through the lower lip of almost every one of the female mummies we discovered a conical cylinder of silver about an inch long. As a rule, these were badly corroded, but by good fortune we found a perfect one stowed away in one of the little boxes with the skeins of cotton. It is in the shape of a thimble, though slightly larger in size, and closed at both ends. In the crown is set a blood-stone, surrounded by small balls of red coral. It is an excellent piece of work, and would do credit to a modern jeweller. It may be that these ornaments were used as a badge of marriage.

I had naturally supposed that there was but one series of graves; one day, however, one of my men noticed that the soil that formed the floor of a tomb we had just opened was softer than usual; so he continued to dig, and a few feet below his shovel struck the stone capping of another sepulchre. This led us to continue work in some of the holes we had abandoned, and we soon discovered that there were in some instances three or four layers of graves. While the arrangement of these graves is similar to that of the upper ones, the pottery is of inferior artistic quality and appears to be of much greater antiquity. It may even be that of
a different

a different race ; for ages may have elapsed before the sands could cover the graves so deeply that they were forgotten and new ones made above them.

You can have no idea how absorbedly interested I became in my excavations among these poor old bones ; only it saddened me to find in their trinket-filled graves another confirmation of that awful truth—futility ! If their cast into the darkness flew so wide the mark, what hope have we ? Their faith was as strong as ours. Was its betrayal any greater than ours will be ? And even to a sceptic there is something crushing in being brought face to face with the ghastly inevitability of the future. No matter how hateful life may be, it is beautiful compared with the crumbling darkness of that chill, lonely cell, where even the sunlight is dead. The thought came to me like an agony once, as I rested on a mound, watching my men dig : “Some day I must lie thus for ever. No more of love and life and longing ! Only that !” and I kicked aside a skull and nearly drained my whisky-flask. But in that moment I almost felt the worms crawl through my brain ! And the sunlight—how I loved it ! If we could ever for a second realise the truth, we would never know another hour of sanity.

July.

Not long ago, I passed through a terrible illness, which, but for the luck that has always smiled from my natal star, might easily have ended fatally. Fortunately, I was not informed of the deadly nature of the attack until the danger was over, or I might pardonably have died of fright.

I had been riding all day in the hot sun, and was both heated and tired when I reached the Goya. I found her as usual playing with the little blackbird, which has been her dearest friend ever since the day she came to her new home. I carelessly threw off my

my coat, and must have put myself in a draught, for I was suddenly seized with a violent cramp—the common result of a chill under such circumstances. I took a few drops of chlorodyne, and lay down on the bed until relief should come.

The matter seemed simple enough to me, but the Goya was panic-stricken. She clasped her hands together and looked at me in an agony of fear.

“Oh, Señor, Señor, it may be *chucaque*, it may be *chucaque*. What shall I do? What shall I do? Where can I find a *curadora*? Oh you will die; you will die! What shall I do; what shall I do?”

She was nearly hysterical; then an idea came to her.

“Perhaps the peddlers will know,” she cried, and she flew out of the house.

Soon she returned with a wizened old woman who carried several small gourds in her arms. The Goya ran to a cupboard and brought out a large cloth and a bowl, which she filled with water. In spite of the pain, I was curious to see what would happen. The old woman hurriedly threw into the bowl a portion of the contents of each of the gourds. Among these I recognised powdered mustard and tobacco flakes. When the mixture was ready, she spread it upon the cloth; and unceremoniously tearing open my clothing she placed the plaster across my stomach. Upon this, starting from the centre she began to inscribe a widening spiral with her forefinger; all the while muttering a sort of incantation of which I could distinguish only the words “Ave Maria” reiterated from time to time. The Goya stood anxiously near me with her hands raised as if in prayer. After making the sign of the cross over my body, the woman again traced the spiral and repeated the mystic formula. Gradually the pain subsided and before long I was able to say truthfully

truthfully that I was better ; after a final sign of the cross, the plaster was removed and I was allowed to stand up.

Naturally I was eager to know what had happened to me. Then I learned of a disease that would sadly puzzle a Jenner. If any one, even in jest, causes you to feel shame or humiliation or as we would say "to feel cheap," you are at once exposed to the most insidious of maladies—*chucaque* ; you will be seized with a severe internal cramp, and unless you take the proper precautions you will forthwith die. And these precautions, what are they ? You must find a *curadora*, an old woman who understands the secret of the cure, and she must treat you at once just as I had been treated. The worst of it is, you need not be present while your neighbour is holding you up to ridicule in order to experience this dire complaint. It will attack you unawares if some ungentlemanly friend is taking advantage of your absence. Think of the awful suspicions a plain old touch of colic may arouse in the Indian mind. Of course, in my case, the chlorodyne was science thrown away.

I offered the woman some money for her professional services, but she seemed hurt to think that I suspected her of mercenary motives, and she declined to accept it. I learned that she was one of a party of peddlers who had arrived at Juan's house most opportunely that very afternoon. As I saw a means of rewarding the old woman's kindness without offence I took the Goya over to inspect her wares. These peddlers are an interesting feature of the native life. In companies of twos and threes and fours, with donkeys laden with stores, they penetrate to all parts of the wilderness in search of trade. They have a marvellous assortment of things for sale from pins and needles and cheap jewellery to the finest cashmere *mantas* and the richest Guadalupe scarfs—which are often very costly. Their patience is inexhaustible.

They

They will sit down in the most unpromising abode and unpack every bag and basket in their equipment, display to the longing eyes of the women the ribbons and laces and stuffs and fineries one after another, and be content if they succeed in selling even ten centavos' worth. If money is lacking they resort to barter and wheedle away goat skins and other products in exchange for the much coveted finery. Time has no place in their calculations. They will sit all day chatting if they think there is a chance of a bargain in the end. They are learned in all the gossip of the region and their advent is a delight to the lonely country people. They might be called the newspapers of the desert, for it is through them that the dwellers in the waste-keep in touch with the outside world.

While the Goya tossed and tumbled everything about, sneering at this necessity, going into raptures over that luxury, and threatening me with financial ruin, I engaged my preserver in conversation. Her mother and her grandmother had been *curadoras* before her. Where they had learned the art she could not say. Did she know any other cures, I asked.

"O yes, Señor, I can cure *ojo*."

"And what is *ojo*, Señora?" I inquired; my ignorance would not have surprised her more, had I asked her what the sun was.

"*Ojo*" means the "eye" and from the rambling account she gave me, I gathered that the superstition is analogous to the evil eye of southern Europe. You are the happy father of a new born heir or the equally elated owner of a superior horse. A friend comes along and begins to praise either one or other of your valued possessions, your treasure is at once "*ojeado*" and unless you seek a *curadora* skilled in the lore of crosses and Ave Marias to avert the spell, your child, or horse, or whatever it may be,
must

must die. What was the formula before they ever heard of Mary and the cross, I wonder?

On the day following a fandango, when the fumes of the anizado are filling their brains with torments, it is common to see half the village wandering dully about, with a circular disc or paper stuck on each temple. This they regard as a sure remedy or cure for headache, but why it should be so nobody can tell.

A lingering belief in witchcraft still flavours many of their ideas. One day a woman amazed me by asking for one of my mummy skulls. As the people usually look upon these ghastly tokens with awe, I was curious to know why she wanted it.

"I want to put it in my clothes-box, Señor," she said.

"In your clothes-box? What good will it do there?" I asked her.

"Señor, I will place it on the top of my clothes, and if thieves break open the box, the sight of the skull will enchant them, and they will not be able to move until I come and catch them."

Such superstition is part of the people's life and blood, and must have existed since the race began.

Why, just this evening I was reading Garselasso de la Vega. I know he is rather sneered at as an authority, but I can say with confidence that, so far as my observation goes, his accounts of the manners and customs of the Indians are singularly appreciative and unexaggerated. I myself have seen not only one but many of the ceremonies and observances he describes. In the chapter I was reading he was speaking of the balsas, or great sea-going sailing rafts of the old Peruvians, which you must have seen mentioned in Prescott. I suppose it must have occurred to de la Vega that his European readers would be apt to conclude that the Conquest had wrought great changes in these nautical contrivances and that
there

there was therefore an element of ancient history in his narrative, for at the end of the chapter he adds :

“These things were in use when I left, and are no doubt in use to-day ; for the common people, as they are a poor, miserable lot, do not aspire to things higher than those to which they have been accustomed.”

He wrote about fifty years after the Spanish occupation. To-day three centuries have elapsed, and although the world has grown to battle-ships, the Cholo is still content with his balsa.

In de la Vega I have also found the explanation of an extraordinary custom which the people observe. When a child is about two years of age its hair is cut for the first time. A fandango is held at the house of the parents, and during the dancing the child is passed about among the guests, each one of whom pays ten or twenty centavos, according to his means, for the privilege of nipping off a small lock of the hair, which is preserved for luck. This ceremony has come to the modern Indians directly from the Incas. According to the account in de la Vega, the Inca children were not weaned until they had attained the age of two years ; then, with feasting and rejoicing, the hair was cut for the first time. He gives no reason for the custom, and to-day it seems to be followed without reference to the time of weaning. So you see these people are essentially the same as when the Spaniards found them. Under the gloss of Christianity and Manchester prints they are as barbaric as the oldest of my mummies.

August.

Not long ago I witnessed a ceremony in the little village of Vichayal which proved that among these Indians the outward form long survives the inward spirit. Ever since I undertook my excavations, which were carried on near this spot, the people have
sent

sent me notice of all their fiestas. The place is a scattering of cane huts, on the edge of an algarroba wood ; the most beautiful scene the moonlight ever shone upon. A tangle of feathered leaves overhead make lace-like shadows on a silver floor of sand ; while the night birds fill the air with a cry that is like the wail of one who seeks eternally and vainly. It is a virgin picture no pencil has ever violated. Those piles of darkness are the desert cliffs ; those firefly flashes are the lights of homes. There is no order of streets and squares ; a clearing serves for a plaza. That break among the trees is avenue enough for a simple world like this. The tinkling notes of a guitar mean human happiness, content with what the moment brings. I have delved in the philosophies of three thousand years of thought, and they have brought me no deeper wisdom.

There cannot be more than fifty huts in the village. As the people are too poor to maintain a chapel, they decided to erect a great cross in the centre of an open space, magnificently denominated the plaza. It was to the consecration, which gave these poor creatures an excuse for a two days' fiesta, that the Goya and I had been invited. I sent her on ahead one afternoon with Juan, the Dueña, and the blackbird. I followed early the next morning.

A heavy, thatched roof and three sides of a square of cane had been built like a niche about the cross, which was made of plastered adobes. At one end of the plaza stood a triumphal arch, constructed of three poles, covered and tricked out with puffed white paper and flowers. A grand avenue of approach, improvised of tree branches set in the ground, reached from the arch to the cross ; while several temporary booths, called altars, lent their colours to adorn the sides and corners of the square.

On Saturday night the plaza was a veritable blaze of glory. All
the

the ingenuity of the people had been expended in decorating the tabernacle ; bed-quilts of gaudy hues formed tapestries for the interior ; from the cross itself depended hundreds of coloured pictures of the most heterogeneous subjects, tiny mirrors, toys, dolls, and flowers. Above the open side or entrance of the shelter hung festoons of fruit and branches, pictures, mirrors, dolls, and lanterns, and most marvellous of all, a series of ginger-bread men, an offering from the children to the village schoolmaster. Everywhere candles fluttered in bright profusion, while the scented clouds of incense blended the whole picture into a unity. At each of the little altars, as if they formed a necklace for the glorious jewel in the centre—in truth, they were only drinking-stalls in disguise—the image of some saint was illuminated with equal splendour. A perpetual fusilade of squibs gave an accent to the pious and pervading joy.

Amid all this spiritual enthusiasm, however, the fleshly man was not forgotten. Summoned by an impatient bell, excited groups were clustered about a gambling game, in which miniature horses, set in motion by a spring, ran races around a circular board. Just behind the shrine of the cross, an enterprising catch-penny had spread his wares, and was driving a great trade in little nothings. Small peddlers, and coffee and cake vendors, strove emulously, but with the best good humour, for what spoil there was to gain. In half-a-dozen houses there were dances, *picantes* and *chicharias*—the shops for the native beer.

The moon was full and glaringly, electrically bright. It tempted one into the mood of the hour. With the Goya and a troop of her little, laughing friends, I visited all the sights, and stood treats to everything. My luck at a wheel of fortune filled their pockets with ribbons and necklaces, earrings and bottles of scent. We really enjoyed ourselves, although they did seem to
feel

feel uneasy now and then, when I passed the cross and neglected to bow.

These wheels of fortune are their delight. A *peseta* a chance, and an arrow is spun upon a numbered dial. There are about a hundred numbers, each one of which, according as the arrow stops, calls for some article, usually a worthless trifle. Four or five of the numbers, however, had prizes that seemed most valuable in the girls' eyes ; and it was most of these I succeeded in winning after a breath-taking outlay. Whether this excitement wore me out, or I wore out the excitement, I cannot say ; perhaps the fifty-mile ride and the two hours' sleep of the night before, had something to do with it ; at any rate, by ten o'clock I was longing for bed. Juan had considerably borrowed a house, and prepared me a couch as remote as possible from the noise ; and I withdrew ; but don't for a moment fancy that any of my neighbours followed my example. Whenever I woke during the night, the harp, and the song, and the hand-clapping were as blithe and vigorous as ever, and when I jumped up at the first peep of the sun, there they were at it still, though certain prostrate forms under the trees showed that the pace was beginning to tell.

There had been a hope that the *cura* of the next town would come on Sunday morning to bless the cross. Word arrived early, however, that he could not make the journey. This chance had been foreseen, and a small cross arranged on a stand, in such a way that it could be carried with poles, had been provided to act as proxy for the permanent structure. Under the hottest of noons, about a dozen men mounted this emblem upon their shoulders and cheerfully started on their six miles walk through the scorching sand to receive the benediction.

During the morning the *anditas* began to circulate. In English
they

they might be called reliquaries. They are boxes, or cases of wood, about twenty inches long, a little less in width, and a few inches deep, with a glass front. They are variously ornamented, often with incrustations of heavy, but crude, silver work. Under the glass is the picture or image of a saint, belaced and bespangled; below the image is a small drawer. These *anditas* are received from the churches (in reality they are probably hired as a speculation), and carried all over the country in pursuit of alms. On this occasion they served also as images for the altars in the square. Of course they have been duly blessed and endowed with powers of absolution and indulgence. Wherever one of them goes it is received with great perfunctory veneration. Everybody bends the knee, with head uncovered, and kisses a spot on the glass. To gain the full benefit, however, it is necessary to give largess to the person who carries it. These offerings are not fixed in amount, but vary, I presume, with the eagerness of the giver to secure a favourable answer to his prayer. Still, as a tangible return for his charity, he receives from the little drawer a scapulary—a tiny ball of raw cotton on a bit of coloured string. All Cholodom wears one of these charms about its neck. This itinerant box of benisons takes one back to some of the scenes old Chaucer laughed at, doesn't it?

I began to find the day a little hard to kill. A languor seemed to have fallen over the place, as if the gaieties of the night before had left a headache or two behind. I sought a quiet shady corner, and stretched myself to read. The afternoon was very warm and the world was very still. I fear I fell a-nodding.

The sun was not far from the tree tops when a great commotion roused me. All the village was hastening toward the plaza, whence the sound of a drum and fife told that the cross-bearers were returning. They were just nearing the arch when I arrived.

A concourse

A concourse of women lined the avenue of boughs ; behind the bearers came a crowd of cheering, chattering men ; leading the procession was the most fantastic group I ever beheld. Five men, dressed in tight-fitting clothes of flaming red, with little aprons hanging in front, and wearing grotesque masks that entirely covered their heads, were dancing madly before the advancing symbol of their faith, to the barbaric and tuneless music of a small drum and pipe, both played by one man, who walked beside the cross. Round and round they whirled and leaped and pranced ; the dance evidently had a meaning. The mask of one of the men was in the shape of a bull's head. He was the principal person in the figure ; the rest jumped about and teased him by waving little flags in his face, or by trying to lasso him with a small rope. From time to time he lowered his head and rushed at them wildly, while they scattered or fell down before him in sembléd fright ; but through it all they never ceased to move to the cadence of the music. Of course it is easy to see that in its present form the dance aims at representing a bull fight ; it is even called *el toro*, or the bull, but I am convinced that it had a very different purpose in the forgotten period from which it is unquestionably derived.

The now sanctified cross was safely deposited in the tabernacle beside the one for which it had laboured thus vicariously ; so, after a few hurried adorations, the crowds scurried off to the ring that had been erected for the cock-fighting. With patron and peon alike this is the favourite sport of Peru. Here pandemonium reigned until dusk, while the publicans (and presumably sinners) reaped a harvest. The mains over, all turned homeward.

An hour or so later, with the Goya, I was sitting smoking in the corner of a *picante*, watching the hubbub around us, and struggling in vain to throw off the after-dinner laziness that pre-

vented me from calling for my horse to take me over the miles that lay between me and my morning duties, when I again heard the summons of the drum and beheld a general exodus for the plaza.

"What on earth is up now, Goya?" I enquired.

"The procession, Señor, the procession."

The excitement was catching, and we followed the throng.

The moon was just clearing the desert hills; not a breath stirred. In two long lines, on either side of the avenue of branches, stood the bare-headed villagers, each carrying a lighted candle. Borne on men's shoulders, as before, in a blazing haze of incense, the cross was very slowly passing between these lines, while near the tabernacle heavy rocket bombs were exploding, and squibs snapped everywhere. Away in advance walked the major-domos, or marshals of the procession, with bags full of candles, which they distributed to all comers. Immediately in front, with their faces to the cross, two of the men in red now unmasked, danced reverentially to and fro. The musician with his drum and pipe, puffing and pounding, strode patiently beside them. Lines and all moved forward at a snail's pace. At the arch the lines bent toward one of the altars. This reached, a halt was made, and the cross set down. Many, undoubtedly, feeling that they had fulfilled their devotional obligations, returned their candles to the major-domos and sought refreshment at the booth. Still the lines were well maintained, for others came to join them. When the march was resumed, a dozen or more women and girls, dressed in white and decked with flowers, took the places of the men as carriers. The two tireless dancers continued their solemn antics: they were like the women of Israel dancing before the ark. At the next altar the two lines knelt down in silence for a long time; the drum and fife, and the squibs and bombs, never ceased.

When

When I left about eleven, after consigning the Goya to old Juan, they had not made half the circuit of the square. Heaven knows how it ended.

This is certain, eliminating the element of the cross from these scenes, I was, during those two days, looking on at customs and ceremonies as truly relics of the Prehistoric Peruvians as the pottery I dig out of their graves. If I could only fathom the meaning it all had for them! It is useless to seek explanations from the living; they do not understand half of it themselves. They can only shrug their shoulders, and assure you, "It is the custom, Señor." Yes, but how much is custom and how much is modern interpolation?

I rode home in six hours that night; not bad time when you remember the sand. I was up again before eight. One thing you will be able to appreciate, whatever injury my life in Peru may have done me, it has not been in the direction of my constitution.

October.

I hardly know how to tell you what must be told; it sounds so sudden, so coarse, so abrupt, but life from beginning to end is brutality. The Goya is dead. It seems a confirmation of our sneers to say so. Why should we worry through the years; why should we dally with love or struggle with ambition—when the end of all is a hideous silence? Beauty and youth with their irresponsibility—fortune and fame with their envied power, have but one conclusion. Is it fear that makes us continue the folly?

After the fiesta of the cross, she and I were very happy—she had forgotten her old restlessness, even her old vanity. She wanted to be with me always. We lived an ideal month. With her

her I had always to be the lover ; she never allowed life to become a reality. Yet it was instinct not calculation that guided her ; she was one of those women who appeal to our strength ; who must always be protected and caressed ; whom we love for their weakness and their womanhood. One day she told me she would like to go home for a few days, she had not been feeling well, and I concluded that the request came from nervousness ; still as months had passed since she had seen her parents I had to yield. She set out in the old way, with her guide and her Dueña. I remember how I lifted her into the saddle and how she leaned down to kiss me before they started off in the cool soft air of the morning.

I missed her greatly during the week that followed. With old Juan I rode away to see her. She met me with a loving gentleness, that now in the after-light, must have been significant. She begged me to let her remain at home a week or two more. How could I refuse ?

Then a messenger came to tell me she was very ill. I laughed at the serious note, it could only be a woman's whim ; still, as I was busy, I sent old Juan to her with orders to engage all the doctors he could secure if he considered the case urgent. One morning he came back and told me she was dead. Somehow I didn't care. I felt annoyance, not sorrow. Yes, she was very ill when he arrived, but the *curadoras* were treating her and he had had no fear. I upbraided him as I might have done had he neglected to do a piece of work I had set for him among the cotton fields. He understood me better than I understood myself and was silent. All I could learn was that she had been very weak, when a hæmorrhage of some sort seized her. They had given her the usual *remedios* without result ; she never recovered.

I knew she must be buried, but I could not face the duty. I
hate

hate death almost as much as I hate life. What a ghastly thing is that final resolution into our natal clay. I could not see them put her into the merciless grave. The thought of my mummies came to me ; would it ever happen that she would make a vandal's holiday ? After the long years would someone touch her hair in idle curiosity ? I could not endure the suggestion. It was better to remember her as a dream that had vanished with the dawn. I sent old Juan to do what I should have done myself perhaps.

They buried her in the village pantheon on the hill that overlooks the valley. I ordered them to set a cross to mark the spot, a cross that was inscribed with her name and nothing more. What did ~~the~~ years matter ? She had lived and she had died as ~~the world had~~ done and must do for ever. The episode had ended for her and for me.

Some days later her father and her little sister came to see me. They brought me a *huaco* tied with a blue ribbon, and in a gourd cage the little blackbird which, they said, she asked them, just before she died, to take to me. In the doleful tones of ostentatious grief, the old man told me of her illness. After several days of great weakness a hæmorrhage came—it was from the throat or lungs, he did not know exactly which. It is this feature of her illness that puzzles me. I know she was more delicately fashioned than these women usually are, still she seemed quite as robust and as full of health. I remember now that there was a little cough occasionally, but who could have dreamed that it was serious.

Then he spoke about the funeral, of the crowds, and of the Mass. He thanked me effusively for my generosity in the matter of the candles. The people had been greatly impressed ; I had the sympathy of all who had attended. He dwelt especially upon the magnificence of the coffin ; nothing so fine had ever been
seen

seen in the village before. It was a great pity that I myself had not been able to go.

I tried to be patient, but his voice irritated me. One grows so tired of seeing these people fingering their hats and patroning and señoring every three words. As kindly, but as hurriedly, as I could I sent them away.

And now the *huaco*, with its incongruous blue ribbon, adorns my desk, while outside in its cage the blackbird is singing the folly of regret.

December.

More than a year has passed since she died. Sometimes I have to cross the river ; there are the same little scenes at the ferry, the same early clouds hang over the valley, and there is the little house half way up the hill towards which I used to look so anxiously to see the light in her room. Why do such visits make me feel sad and restless, I wonder ? Did I really love her, or did she only stir my imagination ? Who can say ?

On my desk is the *huaco* with its wilted ribbon still untouched. Now and then, as I rummage among drawers and pigeon-holes, I find one of her old letters. Always, even in the days of our deepest intimacy, they began with the same stiff, copy-book formula : " Esteemed Señor,—I take my pen in my hand to write you these four words," although there were sure to be as many pages. Some of them coax me to come and bring her back from one of her innumerable visits ; some of them tell me of approaching fandangos in such terms that I might almost fancy that my happiness alone was being considered ; some of them beg irresistibly for something without which existence might become impossible ; others thank me rapturously for a present that has made her joy complete. Poor little Goya, how she gloried in the externals !

A new

A new dress, a pair of earrings, a glittering ring, and she couldn't have loved me more.

I don't know why the world changed after she had gone. Manuel and Francisco dragged me into all the festivities. There were baptisms and haircuttings and carnivals to divert me; but they all palled. It seemed as if it had been the Goya who gave the enthusiasm and the happiness to those old scenes of revelry. I dropped back into my former indifference, yet it was not the same, for resentment lay behind it, a resentment that never found expression; perhaps it never knew its own meaning.

As the months vanished old Juan spoke enticingly of new beauties that were worth a Gringo's wooing, but they never roused a moment's interest. The Goya's eyes laughed mockingly behind the fairest face. How awkward the women seemed when I remembered her coqueties. Juan could not understand; women were women—what made me so capricious? All the beauty in the world had not vanished with the Goya. It was madness to allow the past to shadow the present. Why, many a woman had died when he was young. He had been sorry—yes, but it was better to forget. When feasts were approaching which we had celebrated together, he has come to remind me of the pleasures of the year before.

"Come, Patron, do you not remember how much you enjoyed it? Let us go again. Who knows who will be there—you will find another much better than the Goya, never fear. Had we not urged you, you would never have gone to the fandango at which you met her. If she were chance, may not chance bring something more delightful still? She was only a Cholita, Patron; there are many more."

But if I went or if I stayed, it made no difference. There
was

was no excitement in the noise, no spontaneity in the gladness. I could see only creatures unworthy—uninteresting.

I grew very restless. I devoted myself to antiquities. I worked among the ruins and the graves. I read the old authorities. I even travelled all over Peru to visit the relics of the ancient time ; but contentment has never come to me.

I listen while my two companions tell me how light loves make light hearts. Often in the early dawn, they awaken me with their jingling spurs and sit on the edge of my bed to recount the delights of the fiesta from which they have just returned. It all seems gay enough, but somehow it never arouses me. Better indifference than disappointment. Those long rides had a meaning once, but now they only bring fatigue and discontent. The desert is not so beautiful as I once imagined.

Even the physical world seems to be betraying me. I thought that at least I was secure of the sunlight, but it too is dimmed. It has glittered through the seven years allotted to it, and now the time of the great torrents is approaching. We rarely see the sun until ten o'clock ; a chilling hurricane blows all day long. At evening great misty hosts come out of the sea, storm the headlands, and swarm over the plains like an invasion ; the night shuts black and cold, often with a drizzling cheerless rain. The brightness has gone out of the air just as comfort and peace of mind seem to have gone out of my life.

Do you remember the little blackbird ? It became a great pet. It woke us in the morning with its melody, came to the table with us, ate from our plates, sat on our shoulders and sang in our ears. It was happy and busy always. It seemed to have lost all sense of the need of any companionship save ours. A few weeks ago, Francisco, who had taken a great fancy to the little fellow, bought a pair of the same breed to send to some woman in
Lima.

Lima. We had them here in a cage for a week. One of them was very young and chirped all day for food. Ours, which proved to be a female, spent hours in feeding it. She seemed beside herself with pleasure in the new labour. One night a boat came and the new birds were sent away. Next day our pet was disconsolate. She sought high and low for her nursling, and came to us as if asking help. The morning after, she was missing, and she has never come back again. The instinct of home had been awakened, and she had started off across the desert to rejoin her long forgotten kin. Somehow her departure seemed to me to be an omen. My homing instincts, too, have begun to stir, and I am going back to you across the desert of the sea.

Two Pictures

By Margaret Macdonald

I. A Dream

II. Mother and Child





A Lady Loved a Rose

By Renée de Coutans

HER heart o'erbrimming with much love unsought,
A lady loved a rose.

Through sun-flecked paths she wandered dreamily,
By greeny lawns, and trees, and singing birds
(Her heart o'erbrimming with much love unsought).

And passed she by a rose-bush, bearing graciously
A flowered burden, lovely, sweet
(Her own heart burdened with its love unsought).

She plucked an offering, fair bud,
And pressed it fondly to her lips
(Her heart distraught),
When lo! the tender penetrating scent
Deep nestled to her heart
(Unsought).

And

And stirred that Love a longing there,
Which leapt to the soft purple leaves,
And fainted in a kiss,
A kiss of joy full satisfied at last
(*Her heart was brimming with such love unsought*).

Our River

By Mrs. Murray Hickson

IN these wonderful days of late September—hot as August, yet filled with the finality and sadness of Autumn—there come to me, beside the river, many imaginings, quaint, grotesque, and pathetic. Here, where the sunshine falls in quivering patches between closely-growing leaves, where the water rests, without stir or ripple, under the shadows ; here, where the current is so slow that my boat, tied bow and stern to hazel boughs, moves not, neither swings one inch from her moorings—here I lie and, as befits the height of such an Indian summer, dream the hours away, in company with my own thoughts and the soft stir and rustle of insect life around me. Beneath the spell of this golden weather one learns the great lesson of tranquillity. Now, if never before, do I realise that the best thing in life (and beyond it for aught we know) is peace—peace profound, warm and unruffled—peace so touched with knowledge and accustomed sadness that sorrow has no power to disturb it—peace such as one finds any afternoon during the last few weeks, upon the banks, or on the bosom of this deep-set stream of ours. For nothing disturbs its still flow ; not even the floods which, at times, sweep down its course from the higher lands above. It swells, and rises—true. But the current runs only more full, not less quietly ; the movement

ment towards the sea is just as smooth and imperceptible ; the surface remains impenetrable and dark as ever.

Lately, day after day, under hot sunshine, the river has lain placid as a lake. Slowly past my boat, leaves and twigs drift downward with the stream ; so slowly that they seem to move of their own accord, unpropelled by any force greater than a fragile volition. Now and again a daddy-longlegs, caught in the miniature *débris* of twigs and grasses, struggles vainly for liberty—a discordant note in the universal acquiescence. One sees nothing, one feels nothing, save rest ; rest absolute and unconditional ; rest accentuated by the lazy hum of gnats, undisturbed by the occasional soft plop and gurgle of a fish as he rises to the glassy surface. As yet the trees have hardly begun to turn, but, here and there, a mass of yellow outlines itself against the dusky green of deeper woods beyond. The leaves which strew the river, a gently moving carpet, are unfaded, though now and again one notices two or three more shrivelled than the rest—Autumn is upon us but Summer lingers still. I wonder could any *young* man or woman appreciate such a place in such weather ? Surely one needs the experience of middle age to understand and value the tranquillity of these loitering hours.

Up and down the banks at far distances are stationed fishermen, dozing through long days from early morning till the sun sets and mists begin to gather. No one of them is near enough to be disturbed by his neighbour ; each stands alone, isolated and apart, content with his own company and the occasional capture of an unwary pike or roach. The struggles and death of the victim are blots upon Nature's tranquillity ; yet they pass swiftly and leave behind them a calm deepened by contrast with the momentary turmoil. Rings in the water ; splashes ; a plunging fish—then gasping silence, and hot sunshine on silver scales, half hidden

hidden in lush-growing grass. After that, once again spells of dreaming, and the lazy waiting for a bite, longed for, yet partly to be deprecated. No one under these cloudless skies of Autumn wishes to bestir himself and, for my part, fishing appears to me a sheer barbarity, for which I am at once too indolent and too humane.

Yet, without marring her quietude, our river also gathers in her toll. Only last week a boat was found floating, bottom upwards, near the place where we are wont to bathe. The water just there is deep ; one cannot see the bottom. Close beside the difficult banks is standing-place indeed ; but a standing-place of mud so soft that the straining feet are drawn into its slimy depths. This upturned boat puzzled us, but, on such a day, danger seemed infinitely distant, and I, for one, gave the derelict craft no second thought until, as we sculled homewards through gathering twilight, we came upon men dragging the quiet river for drowned bodies. Even so the thing appeared monstrous, impossible ; and we drifted onwards, deeming it an ugly, baseless scare.

Do you remember the lines which preface one of Rudyard Kipling's tales ?

Tweed said tae Till,
"What gaes ye rin sae still ?"
Till said tae Tweed,
"Though ye rin wi' speed,
And I rin slaw,
For each man ye droon,
I droon twa."

Well, our river is like that ; just so gentle and remorseless. They found the poor bodies next day—quiet enough now, and still for evermore ; unable to tell us one word of that fight for life which had taken place under the hot, bright sunshine ; unable to say
whether

whether—at the last—the river gave to them its own unfathomable calm.

I have felt, since this episode, a certain awe mingled with my love for the restful river ; that awe with which any force, at once placid and resistless, must always inspire us. A few days ago I saw two girls out alone, high up the stream, just where thick woodlands slope to the water's edge. Here, in a narrow cliff, nestled amidst close-growing trees, the sand-martins build ; and here long tangled trails of blackberry dangle and dip beneath the current. Here too it is exceedingly difficult to effect a landing and, if one be not a strong swimmer, the task is well nigh hopeless.

I looked at the girls, and I looked at the boat. It was the very boat out of which those two poor lads last week had lost their lives. The girls were laughing and light-hearted ; the busy birds flew hither and thither : above our heads a golden sun blazed in a sapphire sky, and sky and birds and girls were all mirrored, clear as life, in the still waters on which we rested. At that moment the river seemed to me like Death—resistless, cruel, inevitable, yet with a beauty which I could neither gainsay nor comprehend. I wonder, when we really know, whether Death too may prove a Great Tranquillity.

Two Pictures

By Frances Macdonald

I. Ill Omen

II. The Sleeping Princess



Kathy

By Oswald Sickert

AT a little after nine o'clock one evening towards the end of August, Mrs. Lee-Martin, her daughters Eva and Clara, her niece, Katharine Shinner, and a kind of cousin, Huddleston, were all sitting in the vestibule attached to the ball-room of the Dieppe Casino. A waltz had just been played, and the next dance was the "Berline," an invention of the dancing master's which the Lee-Martins did not know, so they had an interval for watching and discussing the people.

They had been in Dieppe a week, and the chief object of their discussions was a young man of twenty, a Mr. Reynolds, whom they all disliked. He was not tall, he had dark brown curly hair which parted well in the middle, a tawny face with clear complexion and clean features; he dived and danced admirably; he was always exquisitely dressed, his manners were easy, and he was a great favourite with his partners. Eva and Clara had quarrelled with everything about him, including his long brown overcoat with a waist, which was so effeminate. Huddleston, who dressed very quietly, generously defended him. Mrs. Lee-Martin did not fancy the style of some of the girls with whom Reynolds danced, and she was just as well pleased her girls did not like him.

Kathy exceeded the rest of the party in her objection to Reynolds;

Reynolds ; indeed she felt so strongly on the subject that she could not bring herself to join in the perpetual discussions of his faults, vexed that her two grown-up cousins should talk so much of him—he was so very far removed from her ideal of what a man should be. And now she talked to her aunt rather than watch him dancing the “Berline.” She was an orphan and just sixteen, very sensitive, sometimes a little oppressed by her position as guest of the Lee-Martins, a poor relation with no particular prospects ; though she was wise enough to see that they gave her no reason for this feeling, probably never thought about her position except with the wish to help freely and gaily. But she was altogether sensitive and troubled by a pride which had come upon her early.

Meanwhile Reynolds was saying to himself every five minutes : “I really must dance with the younger Miss Lee-Martin to-night.”

He had been settled in Dieppe a good fortnight when the Lee-Martins arrived, and so he had not thought it his duty to dance with the girls after his first introduction at the tennis-club. They were to his mind unnecessarily English : they walked about all day in men’s straw hats, the eternal shirt or blouse and serge skirt. However, he had played in a set with Clara that afternoon, so he really would have to dance with her.

He was thoroughly enjoying his stay in Dieppe ; it was his first independent outing, and everything, including his overcoat, had been successful. The first time he went out in it he had felt shy : it was just the latest thing, and he hardly knew yet whether he was the kind of person who could afford to dress fashionably. However, it had turned out all right. He especially liked the way in which the brown sleeve sat over the white shirt cuff, and contrasted with the dress gloves when he wore the coat in the evening. He had been in Dieppe many times before ; but he had

had not done the whole business properly, and he was delighted to find that he had fallen on his feet, that he could do all that was wanted as well as or better than any one else, and that therefore he was in request everywhere. He had never been so unreservedly light-hearted, so filled with the joy of existence.

He had danced the first dances with his usual partners, for he always put off a change; but at last he came round to the Lee-Martins' corner, and asked Clara for a dance. Kathy was sitting behind her, intensely interested; Clara had a good chance now of being distant to him.

"I'm sorry I'm engaged for the next, and after that comes the entr'acte, and we don't stay for the second part."

Kathy was filled with glee at the answer; but she did not think Clara looked very happy as Reynolds walked away and her partner came to fetch her, and she was decidedly silent walking back to the hotel.

At the next ball, Clara bowed and smiled so charmingly to Reynolds right at the beginning of the evening that he immediately asked her for a dance, and Kathy was shocked to see her start off with him in evident delight. She watched them dancing. Reynolds had conquered.

When the waltz was over and Reynolds brought Clara to her seat again, he was begging her to stay after the entr'acte—then was the best time. Towards the end of the evening the room became empty, and only the superior people stayed. Clara turned round and looked at her mother while Reynolds stood in front of her.

"I don't know whether mother would care to stay."

"Oh, I think we had better go back, dear; we shall be so late."

But Kathy knew the opposition would not last for ever, and at the

the next ball the party stayed on till the end. Kathy, thinking she might be an obstacle—her aunt would certainly wish her to go to bed before eleven—suggested of her own accord that Huddleston should see her back to the hotel after the first part. She felt as if Huddleston were being wronged by Clara's sudden conversion to Reynolds. Till now he had been the mainstay of the three girls at the balls, dancing regularly with them all; he had not even troubled to be introduced to any other partners, although there were plenty to be had. It was true he did not dance well, but he was such a good honest fellow, unselfish and simple. He had always been about with them, and they were grateful, for it is agreeable to have a cavalier. He was well-intentioned and equally polite to all four ladies; but Clara was the more charming of the two sisters, and it was evidently she who made their company pleasant to him. Now Kathy saw that he would continue to do everything he could for them; but that Reynolds might step in at any moment and perform the pleasanter duties. So she talked cheerfully to Huddleston during their walk back to the hotel, making him tell her about his plans and the kind of work he would like to do when he was ordained.

Reynolds had been surprised to find that Clara Lee-Martin danced well, better than any of his former partners; and instead of being bored with his duty, he danced with her more and more, found that she was pretty, and that she liked his company. So he saw a great deal of her, bathed with her, and made her come to the end of the wooden pier and dive off instead of going into the water from the beach, sat near the Lee-Martins at concerts, and went with them to eat cakes at all the confectioners down the Grande Rue. They still talked of Reynolds a good deal, but no longer with disapproval. Clara would repeat his good stories, and they would wonder what his people were like: his father
and

and mother were at Carlsbad, two elder brothers fishing in Norway, and they were all to meet in Paris towards the end of September.

On the Sunday, ten days after their first dance, Reynolds was wondering at lunch-time whether he should be able to find Clara Lee-Martin anywhere in the afternoon. She would probably be going out for a walk, and he might join her. Sunday managed to be rather a blank day, even in Dieppe, chiefly because most of the English colony would not dance in the evening, and as Reynolds did not go to either of the churches, he never knew where the people had got to. He felt shy of walking into the hotel to ask for her; but she was often on the balcony outside her window, and anyhow, if she were going out, he could watch for her. After waiting about near the hotel for a quarter of an hour, thinking what a fool he was to cling to so small a chance, she appeared at her window. He walked back quickly towards the hotel and saluted her, and then came up close under the balcony.

"Are you going for a walk this afternoon?"

"Yes, we're going to Pourville."

"Might I come with you?"

She nodded her head, smiling, and went in. Reynolds moved away and looked at a bicycle shop further on. That was a piece of good luck! He imagined how empty he would have felt all the afternoon if chance had not turned so well and given him the occupation he wished for. After a few minutes Huddleston appeared from the hotel and sat down at one of the little iron tables. Reynolds was doubtful what to do; he thought Huddleston probably did not approve of him, and probably too he would not be over pleased to know that he was going to join them; but it seemed too silly to roam about close to him and say nothing, and he was in good spirits and well-intentioned towards everyone,

so he went up to him and began talking pleasantly. Soon he saw Clara coming downstairs, she was turning her head back, calling out something to her sister. She smiled when she saw Reynolds, went to the edge of the pavement to look at the sky, and asked Huddleston his opinion on the weather, which he gave as an authority. Her mother was going to call on the English curate's wife. Eva and Kathy came out together. Kathy was disgusted to see that Reynolds had calmly made himself one of the party.

Through the town and up the Faubourg they walked all pretty evenly together ; but when they reached the division in the road, where the houses stop, and the short cut goes straight up, narrow and overhung with trees, the party divided naturally ; Huddleston walked in front with Eva and Kathy, and Reynolds a few feet behind with Clara. Kathy was angrier than ever ; poor, manly, honest Huddleston had only two more days in Dieppe and this fop had appropriated Clara. Reynolds was chattering and Clara laughing incessantly. He talked of parents and their ways till Clara had to stand still for laughing ; then of schoolmasters, and Kathy would have laughed herself as she overheard him ; if she had not been so angry and so sorry for Huddleston—he was talking with Eva about the train service between London and Haslemere. Reynolds evidently overheard them, for he began an absurd description of Waterloo station and its difficulties ; there seemed no end to his drivel—indeed Reynolds was in very good spirits.

They reached the top of the hill and walked on the high road a few hundred yards till Reynolds said from behind that they must go by the cliff, so they turned off the road to the right. Reynolds declared that it was one of the most exhilarating and inspiring spots in the world, and made Clara stand still and look about her. Of course every one knew that the cliff path to Pourville was lovely,

lovely, and it was just like Reynolds' impertinence to pose before Clara as a discoverer. Kathy wondered how Clara could be so easily satisfied with this man's conversation and dictatorial ways of amusing her.

Huddleston stopped to show Eva a pretty and rare kind of butterfly on their path—he was learned in science, and the butterfly was one of his strong points. Before, Clara had always shown interest in Huddleston's explanations; but now she passed by talking to Reynolds.

Kathy now had Reynolds in front of her as they began to go down hill into the valley, and she was acutely sensible of the differences between Reynolds' and Huddleston's appearance. She noticed how Reynolds' coat sat well round the collar, Huddleston's came up too far behind in a point so as almost to hide it; Reynolds' black straw hat made a successful angle on his head, Huddleston was wearing an old yellow straw trimmed with the colours of some out-of-the-way school; the crisp curls of Reynolds' dark hair left off clean at the neck, Huddleston's short fair hair had no definite ending; Huddleston's nose reached some way beyond the shade of his hat, hence it was scarlet with the sun; Reynolds' complexion was deliciously clean and pale—in fact he was a dark man, and she came to the conclusion that a fair man, however good looking, could never look smart. The comparison made her angrier still.

Reynolds and Clara raced laughing down the last few yards, which ran very steep: Huddleston began trotting in a feeble way, and Eva followed. Kathy would not run, make a fool of herself just because Reynolds had chosen to set the example.

When they reached the road again which crossed the valley parallel to the beach, Kathy was some way behind the two couples. She saw Reynolds and Clara stand on the little iron bridge

bridge and watch the stream, and then turn to the right and clamber over the high shelf of shingle which hid the sea from view. Eva and Huddleston stood for a moment uncertain whether to follow them ; finally they did. Kathy came up to the bridge and leant over, fascinated by the rush of the stream into the tunnel under the shingle ; she would wait till the others came back. However they were longer than she had expected, and as they were hidden by the shingle bank, she thought they might be walking along the beach, so she scrambled up the shifting mountain of pebbles and found them all four standing on the end of a long wooden box which enclosed the stream for some way after its reappearance. She walked along the slippery uneven planks ; it certainly was a fascinating place, with the water rushing below her feet. They were discussing tea.

“Of course there’s only one possible place,” Reynolds was saying. “You can’t go anywhere else but the Casino—surely you’ve been there? Oh, but it’s immense, you must see it! The proprietor is a famous cook, and has a telephone to Dieppe, so that people may order dinner and lunch and then come out to eat it. And the big room is a sort of picture gallery ; there are two magnificent Monets there, portraits of the proprietor and his wife. You must come ; it’s one of the sights of Normandy.”

They walked on to the Casino. Kathy admitted to herself that it was strange, but very ugly and stupidly arranged. You could not see the sea at all ; the Casino, which was really a restaurant, faced another building which evidently contained the kitchen ; a few carriages stood in the yard at the end of the space between the two buildings, and people were sitting about at tables. The famous picture-gallery was a ridiculously ugly room with dreadful pictures on the walls, little tables all the way up on each side, an old and dusty petits-chevaux machine at the top ; and the two
magnificent

magnificent portraits were absurd. As they turned to walk out again, Reynolds pointed to a group of people playing cards in a little side room; the old man sitting with his wife at the head of the green baize table, he said, was the proprietor, and Kathy had to own to herself that the portraits were wonderfully like. They took a table outside and ordered tea, Reynolds insisting on having a galette—you couldn't come to Pourville and not have a galette, it was the proper thing to do—and he explained that it was no question of whether you liked galette or not, you had to have it.

“My dear, you'll have to do many things in life which you don't like.”

During tea, Kathy noticed more than ever on what easy terms Reynolds and Clara stood after so short an acquaintance. He had taken to calling her “Miss Claire,” in imitation of a Frenchman whom he had overheard asking her for a dance; and the name suited so well, besides overcoming the confusion between the sisters, that all her partners, even Huddleston, had caught up the habit. But Kathy was most shocked at this sign of familiarity.

Miss Claire had a way of yawning, when she was bored, in a subdued fashion, without opening her mouth. Reynolds had noticed this at once at a concert, and had caught her eye and made her smile, and this had grown to be a joke between them. Reynolds was always catching her eye during a yawn, and made her smile every time. He was certainly very quick, and was so gay and polite that he did not appear exactly impertinent. But Kathy did not like this secret understanding between them, and wished he had come across a girl who would have made things a little more difficult for him.

After tea they started back again, walking abreast along
the

the road. Huddleston gave them mathematical puzzles, guessing numbers :

“Odd or even ? How many sevens in it ? ”

Or else :

“Reverse the order of the pounds shillings and pence, subtract, add”

Climbing the cliff, the party divided as before. When the three reached the top, Huddleston stopped and said he would try the height of the cliff. He took out his watch and let a stone drop upon the beach below. He had done it before. Clara and Reynolds came up and stood by, Reynolds pretending interest in the operation, though Kathy felt that he thought it stupid. Huddleston, as usual, found some difficulty in his trick, because he could not tell when the stone reached the bottom, so he made Eva watch for it and call out “Now.” After he had worked out the sum, and Reynolds had said it was very clever, they walked on again all together. Clara and Reynolds had evidently been discussing pictures on their way up. Clara had no particular opinions of her own in this matter ; but Reynolds’ admiration for the ugly old lady’s portrait at Pourville had led her to the usual statement about ugly subjects. Reynolds, of course, had begun by arguing that because a face was, humanly speaking, ugly, that did not prevent its being a beautiful subject for a picture ; and he went on to the more general statement that the painter was not in the least concerned with the ordinary human meaning-of his subject.

“A painter I know was making a sketch in the Brompton Road ; a man watched him for a moment, and then said : ‘Why, you’re drawing Tattersall’s !’ Without stopping work the painter answered in a vague, innocent voice : ‘Oh, am I ?’ The man almost shrieked with amazement and indignation : ‘What ! You don’t even know what you’re drawing ?’ ”

Clara

Clara laughed, Kathy laughed too; she saw it was a good illustration; she looked at Huddleston's face—perhaps he had not quite followed.

"And if you enlarge upon the story, it comes out very well. The old critics are standing in front of a picture; 'How disgusting! The man's painted a dung-heap!' One of them adds: 'Ah, but there's a flower on it; that redeems the picture.' People think that's good. The young critics come up and say: 'Of course a dung-heap, why not? A dung-heap is delightful, just as good as a bed of roses.' Everybody cheers and repeats the discovery. At last the painter comes and looks at it, and says to himself, 'Yes, I suppose it is a dung-heap; I never thought of that before. How clever people are!'"

But Kathy found a way out of the difficulty. What Reynolds had said was clever, of course. It would do well in an article. But it wasn't original; he had picked it up somewhere. That settled it. Huddleston was not amusing; but at any rate he was manly and not a humbug, pretending to know about all sorts of things of which he was ignorant. But was Huddleston's trick with the stone and the cliff original, she suddenly thought. He hadn't discovered that; some one must have taught him. Was the only difference then really that he was dull and Reynolds was amusing? She gave up the argument; but only felt the more indignant with Reynolds.

The morning after Huddleston had left, Mrs. Lee-Martin, Clara and Kathy were sitting on the terrace. Eva had stayed at home to write letters. Reynolds had a cold and was not going to bathe; he was standing between Clara and her mother talking. After some discussion Clara decided to bathe, and she walked off to get her ticket; she turned back and said to her cousin:

"Perhaps

"Perhaps I'd better leave you my watch and things. Do you mind taking them?"

Kathy laid her book on the parapet, and Clara pulled out her watch and gave it into her hands and then threw two gold bracelets and a ring into her lap and went off. Kathy laid the watch on her lap, took up the ring and slowly put it on her finger. Reynolds was looking at her. How was it he'd never noticed before that she was very pretty? He watched her face as she pushed the first bangle over her hand; her colour had risen, her eyes were sparkling with delight and her lips were parted in a smile. She did look lovely. Just because she had her hair down and wore a simple black dress, he had taken no notice of her, and how handsome her yellow hair looked all about her shoulders with one curl coming across her flushed cheek. It was pretty to see the girl's delight, and Reynolds was smiling too out of pure pleasure. When Kathy was just slipping the second bracelet over the knuckles of her left hand, she became aware that Reynolds had been watching her; she stopped and looked up at him quickly and found sure enough that he was watching and smiling. She twisted the bracelet for a second upon her hand as if she were in no hurry, and then drew it off and then the other and the ring. She was furious, she could have thrown the things over the parapet; but she let them lie on her lap and took up her book. Reynolds, of all people in the world, that detestable fop, was smiling at the childishness of the poor girl who had no trinkets.

Reynolds saw her blush; she was shy, perhaps he had been rude to stare so. He spoke a few words to Mrs. Lee-Martin and went down to the beach, thinking how pretty the niece was—prettier than anyone there. It showed how boyishly stupid he was; because she wasn't grown up and still had her hair down, he'd never looked at her attentively. And now there was so little time left—
they

they were going on the morrow. The days had passed so easily, spent in pleasant intercourse with pleasant people ; and now just at the end was he going to be tormented by the regret that he had neglected this beautiful girl, and by the sudden desire to talk to her, when he had had the opportunity a dozen times a day for the last weeks ? That evening there was a ball ; it was his only chance, for he was engaged for a tennis-party all the available part of the afternoon. Instead of being light-hearted he would leave Dieppe with a sting in his mind.

Kathy had felt the necessity of taking up arms against Reynolds and vindicating her sex. A fop vain of his fashionable clothes, contented with his looks, always dangling about with ladies, evidently thinking of nothing else, he was all a man should not be. It was a duty to crush this odious type of man, and as others did not do it, the duty fell upon her. Sometimes she was oppressed because an opportunity did not come ; surely it would be her own fault if she did not find one. It was a duty ; but it would be sweet too, sweet and exciting to rise to the height of her scorn for him and show him that though she was only a girl of sixteen, and he had never asked her for a dance, had hardly even spoken to her, she was the one with a clear idea of what a man should be. This would pay for the eternal conversation her party had carried on about Reynolds. The consideration of possible occasions when she might crush him weighed on her mind ; she was always either making herself indignant against him or acting her part at some splendid opportunity. But that morning's incident had given her an acute personal feeling against Reynolds.

In the evening Reynolds got out of an engagement to dinner, and came early to the Casino. He knew the ball would not begin for half an hour, and that it was no use being there, and yet he could not have kept away any longer. He was troubled by the
peculiar

peculiar restlessness attaching to the hope of meeting and talking to one particular person in an assembly. He had wandered in and out of the rooms and corridors, and he finally sat down on one of the leather sofas in the *petits-chevaux* room, whence he could see into the vestibule of the ball-room every time a person passed through the swing-doors. He had determined not to look again until twenty people had passed through. The twenty-first showed him the Lee-Martins walking into the ball-room. They evidently were not going to occupy their usual row of chairs in the vestibule; it was no longer very hot and the dances were not crowded, so they were going inside. But he had not seen Kathy. He jumped up and pushed open the doors, and found her in the corner on his left hand talking across the counter of the cloak-room. She was explaining in charming French about an umbrella she had lost. She did not turn round, and Reynolds waited till the woman left the counter and dived into a remote corner of her little place. He had thought over his sudden liking for Kathy, the obvious question which would arise in her mind was, "Why didn't he ask me before?" and she might well be offended. He had tried to defend his neglect of her; but it was plain that if he had wanted, he would have asked her long ago. He said humbly:

"Miss Shinner, could you give me a dance this evening?"

Kathy had glanced to the side when the door swung open, and had seen Reynolds. She took no notice of him and went on explaining her business, pleased that her French was so superior. She was surprised when she felt that he stopped beside her; she thought of course he would go on into the ball room. When she heard her name she felt a great leap in her throat, she turned to him——

"Thanks, no——" and looked him down, from top to bottom. He was wearing his fine long coat and white evening gloves, his
right

right hand rested on a silver-headed stick and held his soft black hat. The poor boy bowed his head, murmured "Thank you" and went back through the swing doors into the petits-chevaux room. When Kathy was sitting in her seat next to her aunt she recognised how excited she had been ; her hands were trembling and her knees felt weak ; the excitement continued for a long time. The music began and she wondered how Reynolds would look when he came in—he always danced the first dance with Miss Claire. He had told her that he liked to begin the evening well, for then he came on to the less satisfactory partners in good spirits, and ever since that compliment Clara had never been late. Kathy became uneasy as the waltz drew to a close and Reynolds did not appear. They were all talking as if nothing were the matter ; but Kathy knew how disappointed Clara must be at the unexpected breach of one of those little arrangements which are so precious and give such an intimate excitement to life. Two more dances passed and still Reynolds was not there. Eva said :

"Mr. Reynolds' cold must be worse."

"He was playing tennis with the Sandeman party this afternoon," Clara added ; "perhaps that made it worse."

Kathy was relieved ; she had not known whether the Lee-Martins had seen Reynolds with her or not.

"It isn't like Mr. Reynolds to stay away from a dance for a cold," Clara went on, "and I know he specially wanted to come to-night. He said yesterday evening that the last ball wasn't such a melancholy occasion when all the party were leaving on the same day ; and he's going to Paris to-morrow."

Kathy's astonishment had changed to an uncomfortable guilty feeling, and finally to indignation. The fop was offended because she would not dance with him, and so his lordship in a huff would

not dance with her sweet cousin, though he must know that she depended on him for the enjoyment of her last evening. He simply had no right to behave so ; it was scandalous. No doubt he did it on purpose, knowing that she would be vexed and feel guilty if he did not come and dance with Clara. That would be like Reynolds—always catching on to girls' weaknesses, no doubt flattering himself upon his insight.

The Lee-Martins left at the entr'acte. Only two of their partners were still dancing, and they were chiefly engaged with another party ; besides, they were of no account in Clara's eyes. Kathy felt deeply for Clara's disappointment as the little party walked silently back to the hotel ; she knew better than any one how much such a thing as a last ball meant to her.

When he left Kathy, Reynolds had dropped into his sofa again, with a pain across his chest. He did not remember ever to have been so hurt as he was by her refusal ; he had asked so humbly. She had a perfect right to be offended with him for having put off asking her until the very last day. What could he do to make amends ? How pretty she had looked. The music began, but he could not make up his mind to go into the ball-room. It was Miss Claire's dance ; she would be disappointed. It was shameful not to go in and dance with her ; and yet, if he could bring himself to do so, Kathy would think he was callous and did not mind. He was tormented with doubt. He went outside and looked through a window into the ball-room and saw the girls sitting. He wondered whether they had seen him talking to Kathy ; at any rate, Kathy would probably say that she had spoken to him. What right had he to disappoint Miss Claire because he was sulky ? He would go and dance the second dance. He went and looked round the door and came back. It was not sulkiness ; he was so hurt at Kathy's refusal. The second dance finished.

Now

Now it would really be awkward for him to go in, and yet he knew he ought. The third dance passed. How dreary it was wandering about! Each time a dance began he made up his mind to get the better of his mood; but they all passed, and he was too weak to overcome his discomfiture. And it was the last day.

He saw them leave after the first part, and he knew he had behaved abominably to his gracious companion of the last weeks. He wandered about inconsolably until the end of the ball, and then went miserably to bed.

The next morning he hardly knew how he could face the Lee-Martins; yet he must go to the Casino and see them. They were leaving at one o'clock, and he at four.

It was a wonderfully still day, sunny and misty. The lazy flag near the bathing-place drooped motionless at the masthead. That flag, the first point to which his eye was always directed on entering the Casino, was the symbol of numberless happy mornings; but never had he enjoyed Dieppe so much as this year. The morning air was sweet with the scent from the thickly packed flower-beds. He leant in at one of the open windows of the hall, and listened to M. Anschütz playing. The piano rang out with bell tones in the empty room. The music and the sight of the artist wrapped up in his work, playing alone in the cool, dimly lighted hall (for the blinds were drawn all along the sunny side), brought tears to his eyes; and he wished his stay in Dieppe could have ended well, and sighed as he took his arms off the window-sill. He walked round the building, and stood for some time looking at the terrace. Only a thin line of people were sitting in the shade of the long awning. Everything was still. A little fleet of fishing-boats lay motionless outside the harbour; they might have been floating in the sky, for there was no horizon. He
had

had never seen the sea so calm. It was early yet, and the Lee-Martins would be still packing. He hoped they would come ; and yet why should he be tormented in his mind, prevented from enjoying the melancholy sweetness of his last morning ?

It was a quarter to twelve before they appeared, and Reynolds had been growing anxious. The three girls were alone ; Mrs. Lee-Martin had evidently not thought it worth while to come down for a quarter of an hour.

"How are you this morning, Mr. Reynolds ?" Clara asked as he came towards them, "I was so sorry you didn't come to the dance last night."

"Oh thanks, I think I'm all right again. I didn't feel at all fit for dancing yesterday evening."

Then they stood against the parapet looking at the sea. Reynolds felt very humble and penitent and so kindly disposed towards the three girls, he would have liked to do something to show them his warm feelings ; but they talked of the calm passage to Newhaven, and when he would come back from Paris, and of such matters. Eva and Clara had to fetch their things from the bathing-woman, so Reynolds followed the two girls down the steps, and stood about at some distance from the woman's cabin. Then he wondered whether he could go up again and just have a word with Kathy ; he was longing to speak to her. He moved back slowly, then ran up the steps and came towards her. She stood still, taking no notice of his approach ; she simply detested him, and his behaviour the night before had completed her scorn for him. He said very humbly :

"Miss Shinner, I'm so sorry if I've offended you. I wish you'd tell me what I've done."

"You owe me no apologies. You weren't in a position to offend me," she began hotly ; then she stopped, she was trembling

so violently with excitement and her head began to whirl ; but she distinctly felt vexed that her cousins came up just at that moment and put an end to the scene. The boy felt a great lump in his throat ; he couldn't think of anything to say in the short time left for him, only in a thick voice—"You judge very hardly ; I suppose you have the right to. . ."

He turned to Clara and Eva and told them he was waiting to see some one, so he would say good-bye there. Kathy had hardly noticed his answer, she was so indignant and excited ; but she could scarcely believe her senses when she saw that his eyes looked dim.

* * * * *

A week afterwards, on the morning of September 22nd, Kathy was standing in the dormitory near the chest of drawers at her bed-side. She had never been away to a boarding-school before. She had arrived the previous afternoon, leaving the Lee-Martins happily settled in their home in London, engrossed in shopping and other interesting occupations, and she did envy them their happiness. Every one else had such exciting lives. Here she was, at school in Eastbourne, among all these strange girls who knew the place so well and had laughed and chatted contentedly. And her coming to this school forced her to look forward—to no comforting prospect ; she would have to work very hard and fit herself for earning her livelihood. What a drop from the free careless life she had led with her cousins ! And all the regret for the exciting holiday with its golden glamour centred in Reynolds. A week ago she had been in a position to crush a universal favourite ; now she was one of forty school girls with nothing but dreariness before her. It had seemed quite natural then to be on such a pinnacle ; now she was here and of no account in any one's eyes. How was that possible ? The more she thought over her behaviour

behaviour the more incredible it seemed. How could she have dared to sit in judgment and feel fully entitled to tell him she disapproved of him? "You judge very hardly. I suppose you have the right to." She had not noticed his answer at the time; but since that day it had always been in her mind.

And in her present lowliness she felt ashamed of her impertinent righteousness—yes, and pride and excitement at feeling herself at last in power. Her cheeks burned to think of it. But happily he had not seen it so. She really had possessed the power and had humbled him and made his voice come thick and brought the tears to his eyes, and he had thought she had a right to do so. And she pictured Reynolds in Paris, in brilliant society, enjoying himself, driving in carriages, going to balls and the opera—and she leant over the open drawer, and a sudden great fit of crying seized her, just as the desolate sound of the unhomely bell came to her ears, ringing the girls to breakfast.

“Sub Tegmine Fagi”

By Marie Clothilde Balfour

THE sun strikes full upon a hillside sloping to the east, and backed by long, swelling moorlands ; there are firs on the western edge of the path, that guard a fragrant silence in their brown, cool shadow ; but here one can catch the rustle of their quivering needles aloft, where the breeze from the sea whispers to them and brings gossip from their cousins in far countries. And below there is grass, stretching widely, and falling to a little wood of oaks and beeches, and an up-thrust cliff, along whose face young foxes gambol and scamper ; and again an undulation of young grass, and a swaying corner of green corn, and woods, and further cliffs, till the land ends abruptly in a line of amethyst sea that itself fades into the pearl and primrose of the far horizon, and there is not a house to break the beauty of it—not a house, though out of those further trees there is a faint line of smoke rising, that is dimly white against the green ; and round the corner, behind the edge of the hill, there is a little sleepy town huddled in the hollow ; but here there is not a house anywhere set as a pock-mark upon the summer face of nature. There are birds, busy below us ; amid the trees and round the tufts of gorse, plovers are calling to each other ; and behind, on the moor, one hears sometimes the shrill, sad cry of the curlew ; and from the sky,

sky, like falling drops of water, comes the song of a lark. Now it is loud, and if one has good eyes, one may see the small black thing poised not far above us ; and then it rises suddenly, and the sound fades suddenly into the thin, blue distance, like an echo far amid the mountains.

Everywhere the bees are loud ; amid the gorse bloom, and occasional clover heads, and the small, exquisite flowers that hide in the short grass, the pimpernel, and the tiniest vetches, the bird's-eye, and a microscopic forget-me-not, mauve, and blue, and yellow, white and scarlet—a world of bloom and colour blent into the green, and trampled, unseen, under foot. And a thousand winged things poise, and hover, and dart in the indolent air ; the sheep come near us, so that we hear them nibbling, and look at us out of wisely foolish eyes.

It is morning and it is June ; and one of those few days when it is well to be alive, when the feeling of one's flesh is a complicated delight, and the wholesomeness of the world is pre-eminent. One wonders when that approaching century arrives, when our passions will be regulated, like our possession, to an equal smoothness, and *all* of us will be mild anarchical dynamiters ; one wonders whether the grey days of winter and the golden mornings of summer will be mingled also into a dull, drab sameness. And whether those who are young then will ever say, when they look out upon the wide loveliness of land and water : “ To-day it is good to be alive ” ? Perhaps, after all, they will be too wise and have too much work to do.

Down in the hollow, in the little town, people do not look out of window and greet the day with acclamation. The time is gone by when Strephon sat below the beeches and piped his pretty loves to Lesbia and Chloe ; and when Dresden china shepherdesses in high-heeled shoes herded sugar-candy sheep on green and lovely uplands.

uplands. Strephon now wears moleskins, odorous and uncleanly, and a sleeveless waistcoat, of a forgotten colour, hanging open over a dirty shirt ; and instead of piping his love upon a flute, he tickles Lesbia, invitingly, and spits out a jest or two, mixed with tobacco juice, and she does not blush ; while Chloe, in a mushroom hat and kerchief about her throat and head, and a tight apron outlining every protuberance of her figure, is weeding in the next field, and cursing the sun and the sea air for burning the white anæmic skin of her, and wondering whether Strephon will meet her behind the hedge to-night, and whether he is just now "making up" to Lesbia—which he is. That is the pastoral life of to-day. It is pretty no longer ; but it is human. There are no piping shepherds to set the pink and white maids a-dancing, or to sing when love goes awry with them : "Oh, blow the winds, heigho !" as in the old Northumbrian ballad. It is only the green trees and the grass, and the waters, and the eternal hills, and the song of birds, and the nibbling sheep, that are the same ; and surely, even the sheep are blacker than they used to be. The dainty china figures have become men and women—not too clean, perhaps, of life or lip ; not lovely in their habits or in their passions ; taking their pleasures rudely, and their sorrows with reviling ; and loose-minded from the promiscuity of existence. Their joys are as those of the beasts that couple in the fields, and their leisure is replete with an unvirtuous indolence.

Yet they are men and women—flesh and blood ; cursed with the passions and the pains of humanity, and tasting thereof but the cheaper pleasures. And humanity is something greater, if less lovely, than a puppet-play : and in the blackest of truth there is always the white line of eternity. Strephon and Chloe, the pretty piping lovers, have fled the stage ; and their place is taken by Bill and Mary Ann ; who are clad in the warm encumbrance
of

of living flesh, and play the old drama—“the tragedy, Man”—wearing their sex with a difference ; for “male and female created He them.”

No, Strephon no longer sits and pipes beneath the beeches ; nor does Tityrus lie dreaming of the joys of a pastoral life. Strephon is washing sheep, yonder in the foul smelling pond by the stunted hawthorn-trees ; and Tityrus is cursing the weather and the irreconcilable desires of his crops, or trotting home titubant from market.

Along the white road that crosses the plantation grounds like an uncoiled ribbon, a lumbering cart proceeds, and a dim echo reaches us of the thud of the horse's slow feet, and the rumble of the heavy wheels ; probably the driver is dozing on the shaft, where by long habit, he can perch even when asleep. Old John the carter travelled thus, trusting to his meditative mare, who reflected over every step she took with her ponderous feet : and thus they found him that drenching wet day, when they brought him home in his own cart stiffened into a horribly undignified bent thing beneath a wet cover that clung unkindly to his outlines . . .

It was a hopelessly wet day. In North Street—which is the road leading to the northern moors from the small grey town in the hollow—everyone was within doors ; not even the children put out their noses into the grim unceasing downpour. The road was spread with a continuous surface of water, which leapt in a million tiny fountains to meet the lashing of the descending rain, and gathering streams clashed and gurgled about the gutters, and swirled round the overflowing drains. Down the open chimneys and spluttering into the fires beneath ; battering upon the roofs and against the small windows, and creeping in at every hole and cranny ; entering in an insolent pool beneath the doors ;
the

the rain was everywhere, and the low sky frowned in a black promise of continuance.

But at the cottage of John the carter the door stood wide, and the water took its way in without hindrance and lay comfortably upon the floor, reflecting the red glow of the spluttering fire, with the kettle singing cheerfully on the hob, and the tea-things set out upon the little table at the side where the armchair stood. It stole into the very flounce of the bed that hid itself modestly behind curtains and woodwork, and only opened a wide black mouth behind a hanging full of gaudy cotton. Hannah stood outside—out in the rain—and stared up the road in a blasphemous silence. John was out yonder—in the wettest of the wet weather—he who was so old and so frail and newly from a sick bed; John who had married her—sometimes she wondered why—only a few months ago; that he might have some one to nurse him and cook his dinner, the neighbours said—but Hannah thought differently. There were others who could have done that for him; but she, Hannah, who had trailed herself through the mire of the town and had spent her youth in the bearing of chance-got children and the bestiality of drunkenness; she at whom the not overnice neighbours had looked askance, and whose grey hairs had not brought her dignity, why had John, the carter, who was sober and well to do, ever looked at her? Hannah did not know, but she thought dimly that God had been sorry for her, and she remembered the wild unspoken rage of gratitude and devotion that had filled her, when John asked her to come to his fireside, and to come there by way of the Church door. She would have gone without that; but her simple undeveloped mind had its yearnings for paradise—a paradise where she would know what it was to be “an honest woman” before she died; where she could be as others were, who had once never-
theless

theless been—not quite what she was, but still mothers of nameless children also in forgotten years. And she left behind her, for ever she hoped, the life that had been hers, and the misery and the want, and the shame of it; and like a little child that turns smiling from its tears, she smoothed the wisps of grey hairs upon her brow, and followed John the carter to his home, silent, obedient, and consumed with an exceeding devotion. And John, rough John, who had taken her none knew why, had done well for himself, and was aware of it, too; though he swore at her and grumbled after the manner of man, and his hand was heavy. But Hannah had known worse than that . . . and now John was out in the rain—out yonder; and she stood in the street, her dress clinging to her gaunt haunches and shrunken breast, and the water streaming from her scant grey hairs, to see “how wet he would get”; and to recall the hideous words of the doctor when he bade her “keep your man warm and out of the cold—if you want him to live.” If she wanted him to live! God! And Hannah looked at the black sky and blasphemed and shivered, as she felt the rain beating—beating down upon *him*. And presently the familiar cart turned into the street from the market-place and came slowly towards her. But there were strange men leading the old white mare, and women that gathered upon the doorsteps as they passed. And Hannah looked, and the world stood still and waited and waited with her, as the thud of the mare’s hoofs and the rumble of the wheels and the splash of men’s feet through the water, came up the street . . . it had never—never sounded like that before. Then they reached the door, which was standing open, and they went in carrying the bent distorted thing under the clinging cover, and laid it in the black gulf of the bed; and the water on the floor reflected the red glow of the fire, where the kettle still sang, and touched the legs of the table which was set
out

out for tea for John the carter. But he did not want it now. And that night Hannah, who had not looked at whisky since she had known what it was to be an "honest woman," rolled on the wet floor drunken, and dabbled her grey head in the cold pool of entering rain. It did not matter, for there was no one to care; John—the thing within the darkness of the bed—could not see her any more; there was nothing left now but whisky. It did not matter. John the carter was buried two days later, but Hannah did not go to the funeral; she was drunk still; and she went drunk to her pauper's coffin, in a little while. There was nobody to care and it did not matter at all.

One thinks of it now, seeing yonder cart cross the stillness; and the lives of a pastoral people are, it seems to one, so strangely sad—even their crimes and their brutalities are such as gods weep over.

There is a gentle dove-voiced woman in one of the cottages, whose eyes are fixed always on the invisible. One morning her little son, one of a crowd of children, for she was the mother of many, ran out and called to her gleefully that he was going for a ride; and she looked after him lovingly, and saw that the sun glinted on his hair and turned it to gold. Presently a whisper ran up the street that there had been an accident, and Mr. Main's little son had been hurt—was insensible—was dead; and Martha ran, cooing, down the sidewalk to comfort the mourning mother. And she met the little procession of men carrying the small figure, and the doctor came to her and spoke—but she did not understand. How could it be her Jacky, that thing covered over, when Jacky had but just gone for a ride? And she followed them home, her lips pouting with unspoken questions and a horrid comprehension dazing her eyes. For three long days the small coffin lay upon the bed, with flowers about it, and yellow hair curling

curling on a white forehead, and eyelids that trembled when you looked at them, but were never lifted ; and flowers lay over the mouth and chin that had met the horse's hoof. . . . And the mother moved about the room, and cooked at the fireside, and set meals on the small table for the others of them ; and the children ate and lived and some of them slept, within the same four walls as the open coffin on the white bed. And their father sat on the settle, with tears glittering in the tangle of his grey beard, and whispered to them hoarsely, “ Be canny noo ! ” when he saw his wife's dull sad eyes, and the unspeakable sorrows hanging on her lips.

When they took the coffin away, and all the town followed Jacky to the churchyard, Martha wandered aimlessly about the empty room and sought, sought, for something that she missed ; and at last, when the groping fingers touched the edge of madness, they closed on a whistle—a sugar whistle that had been Jacky's, and which was half sucked and dirty, as it had been taken from his pocket when they brought him home. And Martha found her tears, and the seal upon her eyes was lifted, and she came back to a whole mind and a broken heart. But often now, in the midst of her stalwart boys and her pretty hard-working daughters, if you ask her which is the best of them, she smiles and says softly, “ The one that does not grow any older and never leaves my side,” and her eyes look over their shoulders to the yellow head she sees always near her, and the father whispers hoarsely to the others, “ Be canny noo.”

It was he I remember and big Tom Jamieson who told us of the Macara affair—a small thing which none troubled much about. Big Tom and decent, gentle John Elliott were coming home one night from the slakes, where they had been shooting wild duck together ; and as they came up North Street, they heard loud noises

noises from the miserable hut where Pete Macara lived, since he came to the town a month or two back to work—when it pleased him—in the quarry. Pete Macara was a perfectly lovely villain, whose face was the colour of ancient ivory, carved into a mask of the vilest sort of wisdom. From the top of his curly black head to the tips of his slender fingers, he was beautiful as a black panther and as vicious, and the eyes of him were limpid pools of iniquity. He had a wife, whom we saw but seldom, till the latter days, and whom we found perplexing ; a small, frail, white thing, with a gentle frightened face, who sometimes forgot to speak vulgarly, and whose soft hands were but newly roughened by work.

Pete swore at her, we knew, and beat her we suspected ; and therefore John and Big Tom stopped uneasily when they heard a cry rising from the hut, and glued their eyes to the narrow slit of bare window-pane beneath the rag that served as curtain. They did not look long before the cry sharpened to a shriek, and there was a dull thud, and a loud curse, which came from gentle John Elliott's mouth, that was wont to whisper hoarsely "Be canny." And big Tom Jamieson hurled his great shoulders at the door, whereat the lock, as was to be expected, gave way obediently. Pete Macara leapt to the threshold, and instantly met with a shaking that made his bones rattle and his skin crack ; while John pushed past them, and bent over the bundle of clothes that was huddled upon the floor, and whence there came a small crawling worm of something red and sticky. . . .

Tom went on shaking Pete at intervals, till he dropped him on the floor, and swore at him comfortably. It took a good deal of plain speech to ease big Tom when once his huge body woke up to anger. The other gathered himself together, and surveyed the scene sulkily, but with a wicked satisfaction twitching at his lips ;
and

and John stood anxiously by the dirty bed, where he had lifted the woman whom we called Peter Macara's wife.

Tom went over and stood beside him.

“ A'll go fur tha doctor, if ye reckon a'd better,” he said, meditatively ; “ an' bring 'un back wi' me. Till 'un it's a maitter o' life an' death—an' maistly death.”

“ Wull a goo? ”

John shook his head. “ A think she's comin' roun', ” he answered hoarsely, “ a think so. It's mebbe more a matter for the polis than the docter—— ”

“ The polis sure 'nuff. It's 'tempted manslaughter—hear that noo? ” and he glanced over his shoulder at Pete, who smiled, and the stained ivory of his skin carved itself into wrinkles and made of him a malicious Eastern god.

“ Ax her, ” was all he deigned to reply.

John and big Tom surveyed her as she sat up and looked about her composedly, and touched the red wound on her forehead with dazed wondering fingers ; and they said to each other some of the things we had all been saying recently, when we looked from her white sorrowful little face to the evil bestial brows of Pete Macara. But she heard what they said, and it roused her. She got off the bed and stood by it dizzily, and spoke—to the point.

“ It's none o' your business, ” she said, “ what I am, or who I am, or where I come from. All you need to know is that I belong to Pete Macara—and he can do what he likes with me. And if it pleases him to knock me down—or to kill me—I tell you it's none of your business, and I say he shall do it if he chooses ! And—this is his house—what are you doing here?—go ! ” and she staggered forward and fell dizzily on her knees in the middle of the stain upon the floor. There she groped for Pete's hand, laying her face against it, and he spurned her with his foot.

foot. "You see?" she said, and laughed, a little wildly. "I belong to Pete Macara—and *you*—you can go!"

Big Tom Jamieson and John Elliott went away without further argument, and walked up the street together, thinking hard and saying nothing. It was only when they came to John's door, that they looked at each other uncomfortably. "God!" said big Tom; "she spoke like—like a lady—and he—he kicked her off like a fawning bitch." John looked away and moved his lips uneasily. Then he turned to his own door, and muttered very low. "Pah! she—she *licked his hand*."

People did not meddle much with Pete Macara or his wife after that. But he forced her—so we supposed—to support him by the vilest traffic, and he lived in happy indolence till the Squire got tired of waiting for his rent and kicked him out. Then they left us, unregretted; but not before there were many other tales whispered about the small pale woman who was Pete Macara's possession. . . .

When strangers came to the little grey town in the hollow, they wondered at its uneventfulness, and pitied us for the long monotonous months that slowly filled the years; but beneath the surface, it seems, on looking back, that for those who had eyes to see there was a constant succession of small tragedies, the tragicomedies that build up the commonplaceness of life. Not the dainty operettas of Strephon and Chloe, as I said before, but little melodramas, where one only did not weep because one was too hopelessly wretched. For the pathos is apt to be so miserably hideous, that the onlooker feels sick and turns away with a sigh; and yet it is but the setting and the mask; the actual passions are, after all, the great simple underplan of life in all of us, and in such as these they lie nearer the surface. And the innermost soul is the same, when you reach it—or perhaps it is a little more

childlike, and unharmed by the mire in which it is plunged. Bobby Stobbs, for instance, I conceive had a soul that **was** as lovely as in the flesh he was—otherwise. And since Bobby Stobbs, like Hannah, and Martha, and like Pete Macara’s miserable wife, loved much. . . .

Bobby took a house in our street, and we stared in surprise; for it was so ruinous and tumble-down that it did not seem fit for pigs to litter in. We supposed he got it cheap; but a penny would have been a fair rent to pay for it, and we told him so. Bobby smiled at us superiorly. “Ah,” he said, “Tusky will make it that smart an’ comf’able.” We were interested, for we did not know he had female belongings; but he went on to explain he was going to fetch home his wife and children, and that Tusky would make the house all that it should be. He went off with a borrowed cart and pony to fetch them. It rained that day so heavily that he was already soaking as he went down the street; and when he returned with his precious load, it was raining still, and Bobby sat on the shaft dripping and shivering, his only coat wrapped round the baby in the cart. If Bobby could have faced us naked, he would have given them the small remainder of his garments too. We watched a small black woman crawl out from beneath a table and help him to haul the soaking bedding and the few broken chairs and a box of cracked pottery in at the door; and then three bundles tumbled into the mud, shook down legs and followed their mother, while Bobby led the lame pony back to its stable in the Watsons’ wash-house, with his white face looking, so they told us afterwards, extremely happy and well content, though his shoulders shook ominously. Dinah Green went in late to see how they were getting on, being of a neighbourly turn of mind.

“The beddin’ was afore the fire,” she told us next day, “an’
you

you could smell it acrost the street ; and when you came in you could see 'em a jumpin' and a crahlin' from the very doorstep." (Dinah was a clean woman and apt to see things to which other people shut their eyes). Tusky was running about the room, talking to the children, who crawled over the floor, amid a sea of rags, potsherds and other things—which it is not necessary to particularise. She was sticking a few gaudy pictures on the walls, but had not thought of stopping the rain from drifting in at the broken window ; and she was hampered in her work by having with one hand to hold her garments together at the waist. There was already a considerable piece of dirty skin visible. There was also a whisky-bottle on the table, which was propped up against the wall ; and it was half empty. Consequently Tusky was cheerful and talkative.

Dinah listened to her awhile in grim silence.

"Where's yer man ? " she asked suddenly.

Tusky added another smear to her face by passing her free hand over it. "He's—here—I reckon," she said vaguely. "Ha' ye got a pin ? "

Dinah passed her one at arm's-length, and Tusky performed a short toilet.

"Where's yer man ? " repeated the tall, gaunt woman in the sun-bonnet, as the other conveyed the whisky-bottle to her mouth ; but this time Tusky looked silly, and did not trouble to answer. Then a voice came feebly from the depths of the box-bed.

"I'm here—Dinah," it said. "Get ye doon, my woman. Tusky's—that busy—she can't—see t'ye."

The words came in gasps, and Dinah peered into the darkness. Bobby lay in his wet clothes in a pool of water. The bedding was at the fire, so he lay upon the bare boards. He was not comfortable.

fortable. “My word,” said Dinah, “what’ll I do wi’ ye? Ye can’t be took anywhere else, ye’re that dirty ; and here”——. She sniffed.

“I’m—cleaner—than or’nar,” he murmured feebly ; “come—o’ bein’—in—the rain,” and his face looked strangely white in the darkness of the bed.

Dinah came and went many times that evening, while Tusky snored in the corner, and the children whimpered on the wet floor. On her last journey the rain had turned to snow, and the air had grown terribly cold. The poultice she carried between hot plates was already tepid. But Bobby was grateful for it, nevertheless, as he lay amid the blankets she had brought him, breathing fast, and talking softly to himself, while Tusky snored, and the candle and the fire were both nearly burned out. Dinah did what she could for him, and turned him upon his side.

“I’ll bring the doctor first thing to-mara,” she said cheerily, “an’ I reckon he’ll mak’ ye weel. He’s a terrible clever chap, our doctor is, an’ a real decent man, too. He’ll mak’ ye weel.”

Bobby looked up composedly. “Ay, it’ll be a vera sore expense,” he murmured, “an’ that hard on Tusky—poor Tusky—an’ she so handy—an’ goin’ to make the house that smart an’ comfable—Tusky—ah !—she’s a smart ’un—Tusky,” and he looked across at the dirty, drunken little figure huddled in the corner, with wisps of hair straggling across her grimy and vixenish face. Dinah looked that way, too, and snorted : “Ye maun keep warm, an’ sleep, an’ wait for the doctor,” she said, restraining herself with energy, and preparing to depart. “Ye’re doin’ fine, and ye’ve on’y got to wait for the doctor. I’ll gat ’un fine’n yarly.”

She let herself out into the snow, and saw that Bobby lay with his loving eyes fixed on his wife.

“Tusky

"Tusky—smart 'un," he murmured, and Dinah shut the door.

Bobby did not wait for the doctor, so his bill was saved, as Tusky remarked, when she was sober enough to understand about it.

"An'," she added, "there'll be an inquest, an' the jury men'll give me their shillin's—they allus do," and she tried the effect of a black rag that she had found in the gutter, pinned about her throat. Tusky thought that, some day, she would marry again. But Bobby Stobbs had loved much.

Down yonder, under the beeches, upon a knoll, the sheep have clustered prettily, and there are lambs in the lower field that bleat and gambol in the sunshine. I can almost fancy that I see Strephon a-piping where the shadow of the leaves flings a golden tracery on the soft green grass ; and surely Lesbia is dancing, and under her feet the smell of the fallen pine needles rises pungently sweet and pervading from the cool brown ground.

But Lesbia is sadly besmirched, and all her playmates are apt to be unbeautiful nowadays, and in the flock she tends there are too many black sheep.

The grass and the beeches below us, the firs behind ; the trimmed carpet of flowers and the song of the birds ; the silver-spangled sea beyond and the gladness of the eternal hills—only these are the same ; and so, after all, is humanity.

Finger-Posts

By Eva Gore-Booth

I

THIS is the way of Heaven : you may kneel
And beat your breast for hours in futile prayer ;
No faint light flickers on the golden stair,
No spirit hearkens to your soul's appeal ;
No hand draws back the curtains that conceal
The land of shadows men imagine fair ;
And the belovèd shade who wanders there
Invisible, no magic may reveal.
Men talk of all the strength of love and faith—
Vain words ! and false it is as idle boast
To dream you hold communion with a ghost,
And bring to earth again a vanished wraith.
No shadow answers to a shadow's call—
This is the way of all things spiritual.

II

This is the way of Nature : as of old
When from the primal darkness first there grew
Flowers, and the sun shone and the sky was blue,
And

And life's bright promises were manifold—
Her hidden wealth is now as then untold.
He who digs deep enough shall find her true ;
Each miner gains at last his honest due
Of her great buried store of gems and gold.
This is the way of Earth : she hears the call
Of every ploughman's prayer ; the labourer,
If he be worthy, has his will of her ;
From the rich furrows where the good seeds fall
She brings forth life, and all the hope that clings
Round the strong patience of material things.

III

This is the way of Sorrow : wearily
Should one set out with such a weary guide ;
The path is narrow, and the world is wide,
And no man knoweth any reason why.
And yet 'tis foolishness to strive or cry ;
The doom must fall on whom the gods decide.
They walk with pain for ever at their side,
Through her long wilderness of mystery.
Yet though sweet Sorrow hath few words to say,
A dull companion on a lonely road,
Yea, though she hath not strength enough to pray,
And on life's shoulders binds a heavy load,
Her heart is true, her footsteps shall not stray,
She leads at last unto the gods' abode.

Finger-Posts

IV

This is the way of Joy : the artist knows
The secret that makes all things fresh and fair.
She gives a fragrance to the summer air,
And, flashing by where life's dull river flows,
She shakes the languor of its slow repose,
And drives it, scattering music everywhere,
Up to the foot of Heaven's golden stair,
Through the wild tangles of the mystic rose ;
There in the shade beside the river's bed
She rests awhile, and dabbles in the stream—
'Till down the giddy mazes of her dream
She finds the little peaceful hour has fled.
Then forth into the startled sky she springs
With swift wet feet and shining golden wings.

V

This is the way of Life when Joy has fled :
She passes through a wilderness of cloud,
And, wrapped in music for a mimic shroud,
She comes unto the dwellings of the Dead.
No river now, a mournful nymph instead,
By Joy's short sojourn with a soul endowed,
She seeks for her among the nameless crowd
That throng the gateway of the Halls of Dread—
Seeks for the long lost Joy, the light divine,
The Paradise that she shall never win—
Content at last, and glad to enter in
Despair's abode, and rest with Proserpine,
Sorrow, whose eyes are dark with unshed tears,
And all the ghostly company of fears.

This

VI

This is the way of Love : a ray of light
In the mid forest through the foliage shines,
And makes green shadows of the serried pines,
Bringing a secret pathway into sight,
Where two may walk alone in their delight,
And half in darkness ; for the thick set lines
Of mighty trees their narrow road confines
With the black limits of enshrouding night.
Yet has the forest fortress failed in strength,
Swift windy beams split through the leafy screen,
And pierce the heavy shroud of waving green,
Until the narrow pathway feels at length
The strength of sunshine and the light of rain,
And broadens out into the open plain.

VII

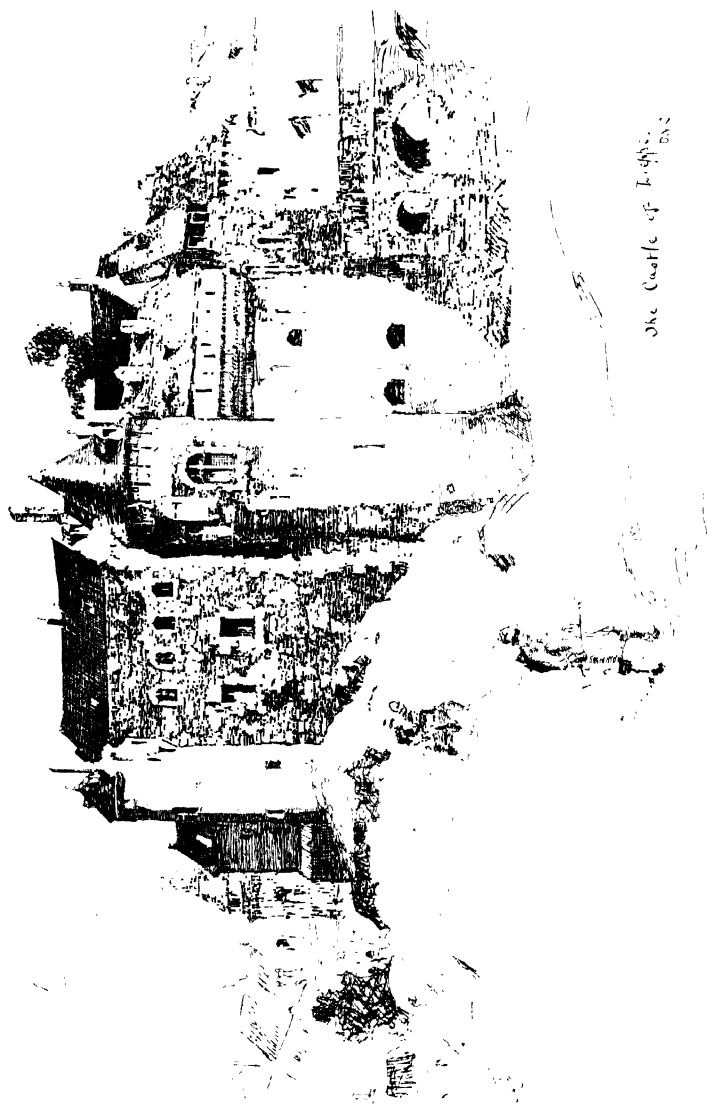
This is the road of Hope, that some men call
The way of Love, far out of human sight,
Amid strange mansions of austere delight :
A way of shadows, pale, æthereal,
High among stars and storm, outsoaring all
The silent glories of each lonely height,
Above the tumult of the windy night,
Beyond the bounds of Heaven's cloudy wall.
Still God's calm splendour shineth overhead,
The great white way where light and gladness are—
This is the Joy of earth transfigurèd,
Set high in heaven, very faint and far,
The glorious Highway of the holy Dead,
The path of Love from star to scattered star.

Two Pictures

By D. Y. Cameron

I. Dieppe Castle

II. The Butterflies



The Castle of Lifford
D.C.

The Butterflies 270



Lucretia

By K. Douglas King

I

IN his life John Burnett suffered no distinction in any circles beyond that immediate one of his acquaintances and friends. He was an insignificant man in appearance, in moral force, in intellect, and in rank—which was that of a navvy. Such fame as was his in Eastown-by-Line (the mushroom town wherein he lived, and on whose railroads he worked) came solely through his domestic troubles. Naturally, the source of these troubles was a woman ; his wife, Lucretia—Luce, for short.

So far as looks went there could not have been a worse assorted couple than the navvy and his wife. Luce was a splendidly formed woman, with straight features, level brows, and a penetrating way of looking out of a pair of very handsome eyes ; but with a screw loose somewhere in the complex machinery of her moral being. This was the reason why her mouth, which should have been large and generous, to match her eyes, was curved to a foolish, little droop, at the corners ; and why her lips, when they were not giving vent to absurd and impossible aspirations, were pursed up in a thin martyr-shape.

She had a twin sister, who hardly belongs to this story, but
who

who told her once that this martyr-expression completely spoilt her natural good looks. Luce did not discontinue to assume it, even then.

She was a good workwoman, and had been employed as a forewoman in a large dressmaking establishment, before John Burnett (as much to his own as to others' astonishment) carried her off as his wife to Eastown-by-Line. Her married life (including the bearing of Burnett's children, the rearing of them, and looking after her husband and the house) entailed on her sufficient work to keep her mind, as well as body, fully occupied from sunrise to midnight. In the pursuance of her wifely and motherly duties she allowed her mind to run woefully astray. That was the fatal crook in her soul; and, in consequence, her husband's dinners, the home comfort, and the six Burnett children (who were a disgrace to their town, so ill-kept were their persons) suffered severely. If she had been "born a lady" she would have read "advanced" books, and become an "advanced" woman. Also, she would have refused the John Burnetts of her own station who sought her hand in marriage. She would have known she had a higher duty to perform than to marry a mere man, and would have acted, generally, according to her convictions—which were of a subjective nature.

As she had neither the leisure nor the means wherewith to cultivate the abnormal in her soul, she asserted her independent womanhood by an intrigue with another man. This other man lived alone, in a large, ugly ten-roomed villa, part of whose garden wall formed the eastern boundary of the Burnett backyard. The navy lived in the last of a tiny, frail row of four-roomed houses, on the outskirts of central Eastown-by-Line. The name of their street was Aspect Road, most felicitously named since it overlooked a brickfield at its upper end and the gasworks at
the

the lower. The new line in course of construction ran, in an animated streak, between this "view" and Aspect Road, which was separated from the railway by a low, sloping bank. The Burnett children, from behind their front garden hedge, used to throw stones at their father and his mates working on the line, so short was the distance from the houses to the railroad. The eastern part of the town was composed of villas and small shops, and one long, straight avenue, lined with chestnut-trees. There were six of these trees on either side of the street, and they were the only trees in the town, except two others—also chestnuts—in the other man's garden. From west to east, and from the canal on the south to the railroad on the north, the entire town was a ghastly blot on the face of the earth.

Life's ironical ruling ordained that the other man should be the assistant superintending engineer of that part of the line on whose construction Burnett was engaged. His name was Caldwell, and he first saw Luce when she was airing the Burnett linen on her little line that stretched across the whole area of her back-yard.

Luce's manner whilst hanging out the clothes, that memorable day, was fraught with a mixture of indolence (which was characteristic) and impatience, born of intense distaste for the work in hand. It received presentment in her languid movements and smouldering eyes. She had been at work since five in the morning, and it was now six in the evening, and she had still five more hours' work before her. Of course the woman was tired in body and sick in soul. It never entered John Burnett's mind (he being a man, and a mediocre one at that) that the commonplace drudgery of existence is sheer bondage to the woman who has sufficient imagination to realise freedom, but not enough to idealise duty; and whose household tasks, commencing at marriage

marriage and ending with death, imprison her from dawn to dusk within four tiny walls.

Luce was in a tense state, and only a match was needed to set a volcano ablaze. Caldwell watched her as she moved from line to basket and back again, her fine eyes alight with unsatisfied desire ; her thin lips pouting ; a tired flush on her curved cheeks ; her hair falling untidily over her handsome, heavy brow. Watching her, the assistant superintendent coveted her.

It was not Caldwell's habit to lose time in advancing towards the attainment of his desires. Between the first attack and the first conditional surrender, the flame of that desire spread and intensified until it became a passion that penetrated to the deepest recesses of his being. Luce was in the most dangerous state of mind that a woman can possibly be in. She wanted something. She did not know what she wanted. Moreover, she did not care any longer about the opinions of her little world. This recklessness of mood brings shipwreck in its train more surely than the most deliberately planned wrongdoing. The first advances came from Caldwell. Luce responded to them with such doubtful eyes and such a passionately wistful mouth that the assistant superintendent, connoisseur as he was in his way, lost his head. He recovered it almost immediately ; but then the mischief was done.

Burnett had broad, stunted features, a slouching bearing, deeply sunken, almost invisible eyes, a slow-moving intellect, and no social or conversational gifts whatever. Caldwell, on the contrary, was a fluent talker, and as flashy in intellect as in appearance. His prominent lips were shaded by a handsome moustache, and his eyes were bold, blue and bright. Also, he was a fine, tall fellow, and, without conceit, could lay claim to a knowledge of women and their inscrutable ways above that of the average man. This

was

was almost as powerful a factor in his success as Luce's own unfortunate mood. Such love as she had ever felt for John Burnett was already worn thin by interminable toil for him, his house, and his children.

When a woman speaks of her offspring as "his children" one of two things is in process. Either she is meditating a desperate leap into the dark, or she is digesting the discovery of a new, hitherto undreamt-of virtue in her husband. Now Burnett had no special virtues whatever; at least, such as Luce could appreciate. When she began to think of the children as "his children," she was already far on the road that leads to dishonour.

That evening when she hung out her washing, and Caldwell had first seen her, was one far advanced in April. It was now late in May, and Scandal was very loud and busy up Aspect Road. Tremulous-mouthed Lucretia did not care. She was living a double existence, and Burnett and the children had only the hollow crust of her attentions. After the first resistance, Caldwell did not find it difficult to persuade her that Desire was Duty differently spelt, and that her present duty was to minister to his. A strong man, or a very selfish man, might have saved Luce yet. But Burnett was neither strong nor selfish. He loved his wife and was fond of his children; but was as weak in the management of one as of the other.

He submitted to his home discomfort like a lamb, instead of roaring like a lion when half-raw or burnt-up food was set before him. Of course, this complaisance completed the woman's demoralisation; just as much as his easy-going, indulgent ways with his children caused them to develop into veritable demons of juvenile wickedness. When he first heard from the neighbours' idle talk that his wife was going wrong with another man, and that man was his own superintendent, he simply did not believe it,
and

and went his daily ways without care or perturbation. He loved his wife, and he still believed in her honesty, although he was aware, at last, after ten years' vain delusion, that she was no cook.

Scandal, as usual, was premature in its assertions. It spoke as early as April, while May had passed before Lucretia really fell. It was on the third of June that Caldwell had said to her, as she stood by her cottage door, shading her lovely, sad, wild eyes from the setting sun : "Lucy, are you going to be cruel, still?"

The assistant superintendent had just left the line and was going to his temporary villa home. His way home always took him past Burnett's cottage. For weeks past he had not ceased urging the woman to sin ; and last night she had faltered out to him, when he upbraided her, bitterly, for her cruel coquetry, that "To-morrow—perhaps—she would—do—what—he wished."

Against the sunset, his eyes flashing inquiry, reproach, and expectation upon her, he appeared as the representation of all manly and persuasive power. Luce changed colour, and her eyes dropped. Her eldest little daughter, Molly, standing by her side, glanced at the man with calm, splendid eyes of cold disfavour. She was neither fascinated by his glittering personality nor over-awed by his position.

Caldwell struck his foot, impatiently, on the ground. "Well, Luce?" he cried, his eyes burning through her lowered eyelids, into her very soul ; his whole attitude a fierce interrogation. "Well, Luce?"

Mrs. Burnett raised her eyes, quickly. They were unnaturally large and bright, and her face was very pale. She nodded, once or twice, and then turned round, hastily, and went indoors. Caldwell laughed ; a slight flush rose to his cheeks.

His fiery, amorous eyes, travelling back from the sharply closed door, rested, one second, on Molly Burnett, as she continued to lean

lean against the gatepost, apparently unconscious of her surroundings. Molly detested Caldwell. It was this lovely, dirty, picturesque child who used to set her small brothers and sisters, armed with stones and dirt, on the assistant superintendent. Tiny arms and the strict necessity of cloaking their tactics by a stout hedge made the stones of no effect. Molly had the supreme pleasure, once, of seeing a piece of mud, aimed by her with feminine precision, stick to the back of his coat. She tried to bully her little brother, "Jack Spratt" Burnett, into piping rude remarks at him when they used to go down to the line, with the other East-town children, to watch operations there. To these heroic heights, however, Jack Spratt could not ascend. He had the pacific spirit; and when Molly called him a "bloomin' sheep," neither resented the slur on his manhood with retort nor sought to efface it by action.

Molly's large shining eyes were fixed on the crimson cloudland on the northern horizon. She looked inexpressibly lovely. Caldwell shot a keener glance at her.

"Good-night, Molly," he called down, to the slim, motionless, little figure.

Mrs. Burnett's nine-year-old daughter stonily turned her eyes upon the man. There was a magnificent disdain in their pellucid depths. She raised her shoulders ever so slightly; beyond the cold movement and that colder stare she made no response.

"By Jove!" muttered Caldwell, genuine admiration leaping hotly out of his eyes. "What a lovely woman the hussy will be in ten years' time!"

With a gay laugh, he bent forward, of a sudden, and thrust his moustached lips upon Molly's. Although she was taken completely by surprise, her defensive action was swifter than his attack. She ducked, and his mouth barely avoided sharp contact

with the top of the gatepost. The next second Molly had sprung up and struck him a resounding blow on the face.

Man as he was, Caldwell staggered back. Molly's eyes flashed fire from the other side of the gate. Her bosom heaved.

"Well, I'm damned!" gasped Caldwell at last, with a not unkindly laugh. "You—little vixen!"

He did not attempt to repeat the experiment, but applied his handkerchief to his cheek, where a red mark showed. Fortunately for the dignity of the assistant superintendent's reputation, both the thickness of the hedge and the sunset hour, when most of the workmen had gone home, had deprived the scene of spectators.

"Don't you think you can kiss everybody!" cried Molly, in a choked, passionate whisper, over the gate.

Molly had seen the assistant superintendent kiss her mother more than once. This action of his, and her mother's complete acquiescence therein, troubled her—though she could not have told why. It intensified her dislike of Caldwell into a positive loathing. She had told Jack Spratt he was to call the assistant superintendent a "toad" whenever he passed; and used to beat him when he tearfully refused.

Caldwell took off his hat, and made Molly a sweeping bow before he passed on.

"In five years, pretty Molly," he said, blandly, "I'll wager you won't refuse a man's kiss. You'll be as eager for kisses then, my girl, as any of 'em. They all are, you know, pretty Molly! There's not a petticoated creature made that isn't!"

"You're a lie," returned Molly, promptly. "You're a great, fat lie!"

Caldwell laughed again pleasantly, and turned on his heel. He was not angry, now that the first shock of his discomfiture was over; even though his cheek was still smartly stinging. When
he

he had swung his garden gate to behind him, he had forgotten all about his late misadventure. Lucretia's splendid eyes, with their vague longing and alternate melancholy and fire, possessed his vision. The exultation caused by her promise burned up again in his soul. He had made communication both easy and secret between the two households ; the last barrier was broken down between them.

II

Burnett's domestic troubles were the common talk of Aspect Road. The matrons loudly expressed their disgust with Luce's share in the scandal. They reserved an opinion on the superintendent's part until the doors were closed. The husbands of most were working under Caldwell and his chief. The men on the line blamed Burnett for being a fool more than they condemned the assistant superintendent, in their hearts, for a knave. Though they gossiped freely among themselves, they forbore to offer any opinion on the case to Burnett himself. The women were not so considerate. Burnett's behaviour in allowing Luce (whose guilt was established beyond a doubt) to continue to live in his house, as if the sanctity of their marriage tie had never been violated, exasperated the women into shrill taunts, which were fearlessly and freely hurled at the unfortunate navvy.

Caldwell was not prepared at first that Lucretia should live entirely in his house ; and Burnett, when the truth of the matter was at last borne in upon his stubborn, unreceptive brain, received from this fact some sort of faint comfort in the midst of his misery. His love for his wife was of unsuspected magnitude, and of a magnanimity beyond chivalry. It was not only for the sake of the six lovely, dirty little children, who rioted, now without shadow
of

of restraint, about the road, that he was still willing to forgive Luce, and that he hoped against hope to win her back to him.

Luce went about her daily duties with little outward change. Perhaps there was more of dreamy haphazard in her method of work than before Caldwell came to possess her thoughts; but there had been always so much left to Providence in the internal ordering of the Burnett household, that a little additional disorder was hardly noticeable. She grew to look more like a restless, untamed spirit every day. By turns she was passionately attentive to the children and completely neglectful of them. But her manner with them was always kind. Burnett, swayed by the twin spirits of his steadfast hope and his great affection, met her indifference to him with a phlegm that concealed, almost too successfully, the deadly wound her conduct was inflicting.

It was on June the third that Luce gave her fatal promise. The month of roses was drawing to an end before the navvy spoke to his wife of what lay up heavily on the hearts of each. Mrs. Burnett was lazily stirring porridge for the children's supper before the kitchen fire. Burnett had come in from work on the line two hours before. Ever since his entrance he had been watching her flitting dreamily to and fro—he moodily sitting in a corner, no word, good or bad, passing between the pair. It had been pay night, and it was one of the assistant superintendent's duties to pay the men their weekly wage. Burnett, whose innate sensitiveness was largely increased by the suspense and anguish of the last month, fancied Caldwell shot a look of triumph on him as he went up to receive his money at the superintendent's hand. As a matter of fact, Caldwell had done nothing of the sort. He hardly knew Burnett by sight, and he certainly did not wish to provoke Lucretia's husband into any manifestation of anger before the other men.

That

That fancied look, rankling in his heart, impelled the navvy at last to speak. But what he did and what he said were very different from that which he had intended to do or say.

"Oh, Luce, dear," he began, moving quickly forward and throwing his arms round the woman. "Oh, my dear, dear wife! Do come back to me, an' be as you was before this trouble began!"

Lucretia was thoroughly taken aback by this impetuous appeal, and by the violent exhibition of his feelings. The next minute, however, she rallied her forces, and slipped from his embrace. Turning, she faced him, with heightened colour and sparkling eyes. She held the spoon that she had hastily withdrawn from the saucepan when he had first seized her, and porridge dropped from it unheeded in great splashes on the floor.

"I—I haven't left you!" she cried, defiantly, the scarlet spot deepening in her cheeks. "And so how can I come back, pray?"

She cast a triumphant look on him, as if to ask how he thought he was going to answer that unanswerable question. Burnett's eyes were fixed on the largest porridge splash at his feet, and he only sighed heavily.

There was a short pause. Then Burnett in a hurried, stifled, voice:

"'Tis true—for all the same!"

"What's true?" asked the woman, with a toss of her head, and another flash of her eyes.

"What they're sayin' o' ye an'—an' that feller Caldwell," mumbled her husband. A savage glow lit up his downcast eyes one minute; the next, all the light was out, and they reassumed their normal dulness of appearance.

Mrs. Burnett made no reply, but resumed operations in her
porridge

porridge saucepan. The spoon clattered loudly against its metal sides, and Luce's hand trembled. Burnett shifted from one foot to the other. At last he burst out into speech again.

"I've never ill-treated ye, nor come home boozy, nor knocked the children about," said the navvy. "Ye've had my weekly wages reg'lar an' full always ! and I've let ye go yer own way in the 'ouse an' never put in my oar in nothink, but let ye 'ave yer own way in everythink," he repeated, doggedly. "An' I can't think"—he choked—"I can't think why ye're treatin' me so !"

Mrs. Burnett poured out porridge into six chipped plates. Her hands were shaking, and some of the scalding stuff splashed on to them. She bit her lips and spoke never a word.

"Lucy !"

She started ; Burnett's voice was so soft and tremulous, and full of pleading love. Since the early days of their marriage, ten years ago, he had not called her anything but Luce. Now another man called her Lucy, whose voice was like music to her weary soul.

"Lucy," said Burnett, huskily, "oh, my girl, do come back, an'—an' love me as you used !"

As his sad voice died away there came from without the sound of many little footsteps and voices. A look of extreme relief passed over the woman's face. The Burnett children, in spite of the irregular ways of the household, showed a remarkable genius for coming up to time, so far as the hours of the meals were concerned. The difficulty often was that they were ready for the meal before it was ready for them. Burnett slunk back to his corner at sound of their approach ; something like despair flitted across his stubbly, inexpressive face.

"You—you don't understand me !" cried Mrs. Burnett, hurriedly,

hurriedly, over her shoulder, as her husband moved heavily away. There was the suspicion of a sob in her voice. "You never have understood me—never! And talking of ill-treatment and all that shows you don't and can't understand me!"

Burnett showed a face of blank, mystified despair at the eternal feminine wail. It was as incomprehensible to him as if it had been uttered in a foreign language of which he was entirely ignorant. It was the navvy's loss that Caldwell understood it as completely as man ever can.

The day after Burnett ventured his appeal, a momentous thing happened. It occurred at noon, and was nothing less than the breathless descent on the Burnett fold of Mrs. Burnett's twin sister.

Mrs. Burnett's sister was also a wife of ten years' experience; but she was not a mother. It was her one bitter sorrow. Tidings of the Burnett-Caldwell scandal had reached her in her little Northamptonshire village, and her unexpected visit was the result. It occurred at the midday dinner hour, which, strange to say, was up to time that day. The Burnett flock were despatching slabs of suet pudding and treacle, carved and ladled out by Mrs. Burnett, at the kitchen dresser, when the cloaked and bonnetted apparition, omitting the formality of knocking, appeared in the doorway. Burnett was eating a solitary dinner on the bank overlooking the line in course of construction.

"Annie!" cried Mrs. Burnett. She fell back a step; her face, dyed suddenly scarlet at sight of her visitor, rapidly changed to a deadly pallor.

"Luce," said the other woman.

"Not before the children!" cried Lucretia, putting out her hands, as if warding off a blow. "Oh, not a word before the children, Annie!" she cried, passionately.

The

The other woman had Lucretia's splendid, slightly scornful eyes. Molly had her aunt's large, full mouth.

"I wasn't goin' to say a word," returned Annie ; her sad lips trembled. "'Tisn't no use ; I knew that afore I came. I know you, Luce ! No ! an' I won't sit down an' eat anythink, Luce ; I've a back train to catch, an' time's short. I came to ask, Luce, if——"

She faltered here, and changed colour. Lucretia bit her lips.

"Well," she said, sullenly, "if what ?"

"I came to ask if I could take the children home with me for a spell, Luce," said her sister, softly.

An indescribable tumult took possession of Lucretia's soul. Many conflicting voices clamoured for a hearing. Luce, confounded, taken by surprise, and dismayed to death at heart, listened, with difficulty, to the loudest and most importunate.

"Yes," she said, heavily, at last ; "you can, if you like."

Mrs. Burnett's sister had come, primed with the best intention in the world. She had not for a moment expected that her deliberately planned request would be granted. When Luce muttered out her slow "Yes," she was amazed, but not dismayed. She thought she was acting for the best in removing the Burnett children from the immediate scene of their mother's sin ; but the wisdom of her act may be questioned. In less than half an hour the entire flock was ready to start, baggage, such as it was, and all.

The parting was brief, and without undue expression of sentiment. The eleven months old baby was asleep when it changed hands. The childless woman received it with a most motherly, caressing movement ; Luce's face was hard and rigid. The younger children were jubilant at the thought of the journey, but cried at having to leave their home, as they went down the little garden

garden path into the road. Jack Spratt neither cried nor laughed. He was awed by Molly's proud, pale face.

"Leave me—her," whispered Lucretia, with a little catch of her breath, and nodding, feverishly, in the direction of her eldest daughter, now occupied in nursing the youngest boy but one.

"God's sake not her—out of any of 'em!" cried back Molly's aunt, in a fierce, incoherent undertone; and Molly was swept off in the general exodus.

Mrs. Burnett watched them as they went down the dusty road. Molly carried the youngest baby, and her aunt had her late burden, a sturdy two-year-old. The two younger girls clasped hands, and walked demurely in front of the hen-in-charge. Jack Spratt walked alone, a few paces in front, as became the man of the party. Mrs. Burnett watched them, with dry eyes and burning eyeballs, until they were out of sight. Then she went indoors, and fell into a chair, sobbing and weeping, till her emotions seemed as if they would tear her thin frame asunder.

"Oh, if she had only left me Molly!" she moaned, in the intervals of her heavy sobbing. "If she had only left me my pretty Molly—my pretty, pretty girl!"

She had not recovered herself till four o'clock chimed out, unevenly, from the dilapidated kitchen clock. At that moment a man's footstep was heard to approach from without; and a man's voice called her name, softly, through the half-opened doorway.

He called her Lucy, and Mrs. Burnett leaped to her feet, and with a little, strangled cry, threw herself upon his breast. His arms met tightly round her, and he held her thus pressed to him, for a minute, without speaking. He could see her nerves were shattered, and that she was in a more desperate state even than when she had given him her first promise. "Oh, they've taken

away

away my children, Jamie!" she sobbed out, at last. "Take me home with you! don't leave me here in my empty home, Jamie! I can't bear it!"

Caldwell held her closer to him. He had come, fearing for once a possible refusal, on purpose to ask her that to which her own beseeching words to him now gave the affirmatory answer.

Five minutes later Luce left her home on his arm. "I'll take you right away from this one-horse place, Lucy," Caldwell said to her, as they went out. "My work is done here, with the doing of the line's."

He referred to the completion of the line, the last detail of whose construction would be an accomplished fact by sunset. With the running of the first train, thereon, on the morrow, Caldwell's duties, as assistant superintendent of the men at work on it, would be over.

"I'll belong to you now, Jamie, for ever and ever," Lucretia whispered up to him, as they gained his front door. She did not mind now if all the world saw her enter Caldwell's house. "They've taken my children away, and I'll only belong to you now, for ever and ever, Jamie," she repeated, as he led her into her new home. He bent and kissed her quivering lips.

When Burnett was going home that night, a neighbour, overflowing with news, darted out, from the next house. She had been waiting three hours for his advent, although she knew he could not be due in Aspect Road till past six. She was consumed with fear lest another neighbour should tell him the news before she had the chance.

She followed Burnett up his garden plot, in order to drive the bits of information deeper down into his dull, clouded brain.

"Their aunt came, Burnett, sure as I'm a livin' woman, and took 'em all away—the baby an' that limb, Molly, herself!"
reiterated

reiterated the shrill-voiced informant. "How you stare, man! I tell you they're gone, the whole lot o' them; at half-past one they went past our windys, and says I, 'Lawks, that's Burnett's lot!'"

Burnett turned on his threshold and faced her with working jaws. She was not overcome at sight of his distress. Her mind flew off on a fresh tangent.

"An' Caldwell took *her* off, Burnett," went on the shrill tale-bearer. "In bare daylight, as bold as brass, she went off on his arm! these eyes o' mine saw it! 'twas like a theayter piece! and thinks I, oh, that poor soul, Burnett, who——"

The navvy waved her back, and she retired, somewhat awed at last, by his expression and his speechlessness. Burnett entered his empty home.

"I don't believe her," he muttered, staring vacantly around. "It's a damned lie!"

Nevertheless, the rooms were empty of wife, of children, and of children's clothes and broken toys. Burnett fell to thinking that perhaps the neighbour had not lied, after all.

A headless rag doll, lying under a chair, caught his eye. He remembered, with the first thrill of pain, recognised as such, that he had left his baby sucking it, contentedly, in its cradle when he went out that morning to put the finishing touches to the line. He stooped and picked it up, and stood, stroking it, mechanically, with his grimy hand. Burnett had not an ounce of sentiment about him, though he had a greater capacity for affection than Luce had ever discovered. After a while he ceased stroking the headless doll, and put it in his breast-pocket. He was not an heroic figure, in his far from clean working suit, and with his broad, undeveloped features and stubbly hair and beard; but, as he awkwardly shovelled the rag doll to his breast, his lower lip trembling

trembling the while, he seemed to be invested with a pathetic majesty that was far above any physical grandeur.

"The children's gone," thought Burnett, rousing himself with a heavy sigh. "But their aunt 'ull take care of 'em till—till the home's ready for 'em ag'in."

He went out, swiftly closing the door behind him. Twilight was falling, and a sense of great loneliness caught him for the first time, as if two hands had clutched him by the throat. He wheeled sharply towards Caldwell's house.

"She must come back if she thinks o' the children, and knows I'm mor'n willing to have her back ag'in," he said to himself with a tearless sob. "She must do that!"

A bell hung to his hand by Caldwell's front door, and he pulled it. Though he was quite calm and composed to all outward appearances, he was, in reality, labouring under a violent excitement that made him feel sick and giddy. There was no response of any kind to his ring, and his eye caught the knocker on the door. He wondered, dully, why he had not seen it before, and struck it loudly several times on the metal plate.

There was a dreadful silence. Burnett's throat contracted. Then there came the sound of footsteps, and Caldwell himself threw the door open. He did not recognise his visitor at first, and met him with an impatient exclamation.

Burnett moved doggedly forward over the threshold, and a hanging lamp in the hall revealed his identity. Caldwell gave vent to a little low whistle of astonishment.

"I—I want to see my wife," stammered the navvy. He found it difficult to speak, owing to the dry condition of his lips. As Caldwell continued to preserve silence, he cried again, striking his nailed boot sharply on the hall floor, "I tell you I want to see the woman who's my wife!"

"Oh,

"Oh, come in, come in," said the assistant superintendent, blandly. "Only no violence before the lady, you know, and no threats."

"I'm not such a fool as to threaten," cried out Burnett, shaking from head to foot in his violent excitement. "I know I'm a fool and can't understand women like her," he added, bitterly. "But I'm not such a fool as to threaten her or any woman!"

"Oh, come in," repeated Caldwell, opening a door at the end of the passage. He passed in himself, and Burnett followed heavily. Lucretia was within; she had heard voices and had risen. As Caldwell entered she ran to him and clasped his arm. Burnett faced them.

"Well," said Caldwell, at last, breaking a momentous silence. "Here is the lady you wanted to see. Say what you have to say, please, and have done with it. We are particularly engaged to-night."

The outrageous nature of this last remark was apparently lost upon the navy. He was looking at Lucretia intently. He had never ceased looking at her since he had entered the room. Lucretia looked only at her lover.

Suddenly Burnett ran forward with extended arms. "Oh, my lass!" he cried; "my dear, own lass! come home with me again, an' we'll forget all this! Come home with me, Lucy! come home, my poor dear! Oh, do come home!"

Two scalding tears slowly trickled down the navy's weather-beaten cheeks. Lucretia shot a glance towards him. There was no relenting in her eyes.

"You see she won't come," began Caldwell, lightly, after another pause. "She doesn't want——"

"Let her speak herself," broke in Burnett, hoarsely. "You've spoke

spoke too much for her, as well as to her, damn you! Now don't interfere now between man and wife!"

"Don't you coerce her," retorted Caldwell, blandly. "She knows her own mind, I should hope! If she doesn't want to come back to you, she doesn't!"

"Well, let her speak for herself, for God Almighty's sake," cried Burnett. "An' don't put your words into her mouth."

"Answer him, dear," said Caldwell, turning his face towards Lucretia. "And in your own words, as your heart dictates. Choose, Lucy! will you have him or me?"

"Oh! Jamie, Jamie!"

"You see," said Caldwell, holding Lucretia to his heart, as he faced the speechless man, a few paces in front of him. "She chooses me."

Burnett's mouth opened and shut. He said nothing.

"She made a mistake when she married you," said Caldwell, coolly. "She found it out when she saw me, and now she's rectifying it. It's quite natural, you know, and an event of every day occurrence."

"I don't know about no ev'ry day 'vents," sobbed the navvy. "But I know you've broke my heart, an' I hope you'll burn in hell fires!"

Lucretia's flaming face looked up above Caldwell's caressing arms.

"And if he does," she cried back, "by God Almighty, John Burnett! I'll burn with him too!"

Her fierce, adoring eyes devoured her lover's face. Caldwell bent his head till his lips met hers.

Burnett heard their kiss as he went heavily out.

He crossed the threshold and drew the door sharply to behind him. Then he turned, swiftly, impulsively. Lucretia's
name

name choked in his throat. The hard, unyielding door reminded him of the futility of his effort, and he laughed, mocking, in his anguish, his own bitter mistake. There was no moon; the twilight had passed, leaving the darker night behind. A tear stood out on his worn, whitened cheeks and his teeth clenched on a sob, when he lifted the latch of his house door and passed into his dishonoured home.

"The children's gone, too," he said again, gazing round the empty room, in dreary, vacant misery. "But this aunt 'll bring 'em back ag'in some day, when Molly's grown more handylike, to shift for me an' the little uns alone. An' I'll stay on 'ere till they comes. I'll not go too. An' p'raps—p'raps—she'll come back too, some day. . . ."

He stumbled, slowly and awkwardly, up and down his kitchen, painfully working out his scheme of the future in his dull, heavy brain. "I don't understand her," he muttered, again, his future revolving round his wife as its sole, eternal pivot. He had not yet realised that Lucretia was lost to him for ever. "I don't understand her," he groaned, "nor any woman; but p'raps she'll grow tired and 'ave no place to lay her tired 'ead in—my poor lass!—an' p'raps she'll remember our only home we ever 'ad together, she an' me, an' so p'raps she'll come back to it at last. If I goes on livin' 'ere, same as ever, p'raps she'll come back at last."

Dawn broke over the grey wilderness of slate roofs, over the railroad, where it circled round the eastern suburb of the town, over the dreary brickfields.

"I'll light a fire, so as she'll see there's no change 'ere," thought Burnett, setting, awkwardly enough, to his unwonted task. A fitful eagerness flashed over his stolid face.

There was a slight breeze from the west. The pale, twisted
smoke

smoke column from Burnett's chimney overtook the larger volume that was gaily spouting from the big chimney on the assistant superintendent's house. Both were mingled together as they were blown, eastwards, over the town. At his usual time Burnett went down to his work on the line.

"If so be as she gives a thought to—to what she's left be'ind," he thought, "she'll see me goin' an' think I'm the same as usual. 'Twill make 'er comin' back the easier."

He clung to the one remaining hope that Lucretia's faithlessness had not uprooted and cast out of his life. Without that anchor to his miserable soul he would have been like a ship adrift on an open sea, and shipwreck would speedily have followed. Contrary to habit, he went home at midday, to eat his dinner in his own house.

"'Twill seem more—more homelike," he thought. "An' 'twill be another chanst for 'er to see I'm not meanin' to leave my home."

The long, hot afternoon of toil dragged to a weary close on the line.

Burnett sat by his cottage door, staring, steadily, across the railroad. The sun went slowly down beyond the deserted brickfields; the twilight drew closer around him, and shut him in, alone. A board with "To Let" written across it, in bright black letters had been set up above the fence in front of the assistant superintendent's late home, since midday.

"But she'll come back some day," thought Burnett. His dry, miserable eyes looked, blankly, into the growing darkness. "She must—she must do that! She must know—she looked at my chimney as she . . . as she went . . . an' she must know how I love her. . . ."

Night fell slowly over the town.

The Serjeant-at-Law

By Francis Watt

YOU have no doubt, at some time or other, walked through the Royal Courts of Justice and admired the judges in their scarlet or other bravery. One odd little detail may have caught your eye : the wigs of three seniors are differenced from those of their brethren by a black patch on the top. It signifies that the wearers are serjeants-at-law, and when the last of them goes to return no more, with him, it seems, will vanish the Order of the Coif. Verily, it will be the “end o’ an auld sang,” of a record stretching back to the beginning of English jurisprudence, of an order whose passing had at one time seemed the passing of the law itself. Here, in bare outline, I set forth its ancient and famous history. And, first, as to the name. Under the feudal system land was held from the Crown upon various tenures. Sometimes special services were required from the holders ; these were called serjeants, and the tenure was said to be by serjeanty. Special services, though usually military, now and again had to do with the administration of justice. A man enjoyed his plot because he was coroner, keeper of the peace, summoner, or what not ; and, over and above the land, he had the fees of the office. A few offices, chiefly legal, came to have no land attached—were only paid in fees. Such a business was a serjeanty in gross, or at

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large, as one might say. Again, after the Conquest, whilst the records of our law courts were Latin, the spoken language was Norman-French—a fearful and wondrous tongue that grew to be ; “as ill an hearing in the mouth as law-French,” says Milton scornfully, and indeed Babel had scarce matched it. But from the first it must have been a sore vexation to the thick-witted Saxon haled before the tribunal of his conqueror. He needs must employ a *counter*, or man skilled in the *conte*, as the pleading was called. The business was a lucrative one, so the Crown assumed the right of regulation and appointment. It was held for a serjeanty in gross, and its holders were *servientes regis ad legem*. The word *regis* was soon omitted except as regards those specially retained for the royal service. The literal translation of the other words is serjeants-at-law, still the designation of the surviving fellows of the order. The serjeant-at-law was appointed, or in form at least, commanded to take office by writ under the Great Seal. He was courteously addressed as “you,” whilst the sheriff was commonly plain “thou” or “thee.” The King’s or Queen’s serjeants were appointed by letters patent ; and though this official is extinct as the dodo he is mentioned after the Queen’s Attorney-General as public prosecutor in the proclamation still mumbled at the opening of Courts like the Old Bailey.

Now, in early Norman times the *aula regis*, or Supreme Court, was simply the king acting as judge with the assistance of his great officers of state. In time there developed therefrom among much else the three old common law courts ; whereof the Common Pleas settled the disputes of subjects, the King’s Bench suits concerning the king and the realm, the Exchequer revenue matters. Though the two last by means of quaint fictions afterwards acquired a share of private litigation, yet such was more properly for the Court of Common Pleas. It was peculiarly
the

the serjeants' court, and for many centuries, up to fifty years ago, they had the right to exclusive audience. Until the Judicature Acts they were the body of men next to the judges, each being addressed from the bench as brother, and from them the judges must be chosen ; also until 1850 the assizes must be held before a judge or a serjeant of the coif.

A clause in Magna Charta provided that the Common Pleas should not follow the king's wanderings but sit in a fixed place ; this "fixed place" came to be near the great door of the Hall at Westminster. When the wind was in the north, the spot was cold and draughty, so after the Restoration some daring innovator proposed "to let it (the Court) in through the wall into a back room which they called the treasury." Sir Orlando Bridgeman, the chief justice, would on no account hear of this. It was a flagrant violation of Magna Charta to move it an inch. Might not, he darkly hinted, all its writs be thus rendered null and void ? Was legal pedantry ever carried further ? one wonders. In a later age the change was made without comment, and in our own time the Common Pleas itself has gone to the lumber-room. No doubt this early fixing of the Court helped to develop a bar attendant on it. Other species of practitioners, barristers, attorneys, solicitors in time arose, and the appointment of Queen's Counsel, of whom Lord Bacon was the earliest, struck the first real blow at the Order of the Coif, but the detail of such things is not for this page. In later days every serjeant was a more fully developed barrister, and then and now, as is well known, every barrister must belong to one of the four Inns of Court—the two temples, Gray's Inn and Lincoln's Inn to wit, whose history cannot be told here ; suffice it to say they were voluntary associations of lawyers, which gradually acquired the right of calling to the bar those who wished to practise.

Now

Now the method of appointment of serjeants was as follows : The judges, headed by the chief justice of the Common Pleas, picked out certain eminent barristers as worthy of the dignity, their names were given in to the Lord Chancellor, and in due time each had his writ whereof he formally gave his Inn notice. His House entertained him at a public breakfast, presented him with a gold or silver net purse with ten guineas or so as a retaining fee, the chapel bell was tolled, and he was solemnly rung out of the bounds. On the day of his call he was harangued (often at preposterous length) by the chief justice of the King's Bench, he knelt down, and the white coif of the order was fitted on his head ; he went in procession to Westminster and "counted" in a real action in the Court of Common Pleas. For centuries he did so in law-French. Lord Hardwicke was the first serjeant who "counted" in English. The new-comer was admitted a member of Serjeants' Inn, in Chancery Lane, in ancient times called Farringdon Inn, whereof all the members were serjeants. Here they dined together on the first and last days of term : their clerks also dined in hall, though at a separate table—a survival, no doubt, from the days when the retainer feasted, albeit "below the salt," with his master. Dinner done and the napery removed, the board of green cloth was constituted, and under the presidency of the chief judge the business of the House was transacted. There was a second Serjeants' Inn in Fleet Street, but in 1758 its members joined the older institution in Chancery Lane. When the Judicature Acts practically abolished the order, the Inn was sold and its property divided among the members, a scandalous proceeding and poor result of "the wisdom of an heap of lernede men !"

The serjeant's feast on his appointment was a magnificent affair, *instar coronationis*, as Fortescue has it. In old times it lasted seven days ;

days ; one of the largest palaces in the metropolis was selected, and kings and queens graced its quaint ceremonial. Stow chronicles one such celebration at the call of eleven serjeants in 1531. There were consumed "twenty-four great beefes, one hundred fat muttuns, fifty-one great veales, thirty-four porkes," not to mention the swans, the larkes, the "capons of Kent," the "carcase of an ox from the shambles," and so forth. One fancies these solids were washed down by potations proportionately long and deep. And there were other attractions and other expenses. At the feast in October 1552, "a standing dish of wax representing the Court of Common Pleas" was the admiration of the guests ; again, a year or two later, it is noted that each serjeant was attended by three gentlemen selected by him from among the members of his own Inn to act as his sewer, his carver, and his cup-bearer. These Gargantuan banquets must have proved a sore burden : they were cut down to one day, and, on the union of the Inns in 1758, given up as unsuited to the newer time.

One expense remained. Serjeants on their call must give gold rings to the sovereign, the lord chancellor, the judges, and many others. From about the time of Elizabeth mottoes or "posies" were engraved thereon. Sometimes each serjeant had his own device, more commonly the whole call adopted the same motto, which was usually a compliment to the reigning monarch or an allusion to some public event. Thus, after the Restoration the words ran : *Adeste Carolus Magnus*. With a good deal of elision and twisting the Roman numerals for 1660 were extracted from this, to the huge delight of the learned triflers. *Imperium et libertas* was the word for 1700, and *plus quam speravimus* that of 1714, which was as neat as any. The rings were presented to the judges by the serjeant's "colt," as the barrister attendant on him through the ceremony was called (probably from colt, an apprentice) ;

apprentice); he also had a ring. In the ninth of Geo. II. the fourteen new serjeants gave as of duty 1409 rings, valued at £773. That call cost each serjeant nearly £200. This ring-giving continued to the end; another custom, that of giving liveries to relatives and friends, was discontinued in 1759.

In mediæval times the new serjeants went in procession to St. Paul's, and worshipped at the shrine of Thomas à Becket; then to each was allotted a pillar so that his clients might know where to find him. The Reformation put a summary end to the worship of St. Thomas, but the formality of the pillar lingered on till Old St. Paul's and Old London blazed in the Great Fire of 1666.

The mediæval lawyer lives for us to-day in Chaucer's famous picture:

“A Sergeant of Lawe, war and wys,
 That often hadde ben atte parvys,
 Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
 Discret he was, and of great reverence:
 He semede such, his wordes weren so wise,
 Justice he was ful often in assise,
 By patente, and by pleyn commissioun;
 For his science, and for his heih renoun,
 Of fees and robes hadde he many oon.
 So gret a purchasour was nowher noon.
 Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
 His purchasyng mighte nought ben enfecte.
 Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
 And yit he seemede besier than he was.
 In termes hadde he caas and domes alle;
 That fro the tyme of kyng William were falle.
 Therto he couthe endite, and make a thing,
 Ther couthe no wight pynche at his writyng;
 And every statute couthe he pleyn by roote.

He rood but hoonly in a medlé coote,
Gird with a seynt of silk, with barres smale ;
Of his array telle I no lenger tale."

How lifelike that touch of the fussy man, who "seemed besier than he was ! " But each line might serve as text for a long dissertation ! The old court hours were early : the judges sat from eight till eleven, when your busy serjeant would, after bolting his dinner, hie him to his pillar where he would hear his client's story, "and take notes thereof upon his knee." The parvys or pervyse of Paul's—properly, only the church door—had come to mean the nave of the cathedral, called also "Paul's Walk," or "Duke Humphrey's Walk," from the supposed tomb of Duke Humphrey that stood there. In Tudor times it was the great lounge and common newsroom of London. Here the needy adventurer "dined with Duke Humphrey," as the quaint euphemism ran ; here spies garnered in the popular opinion for the authorities. It was the very place for the lawyer to meet his client, yet had he other resorts : the round of the Temple Church and Westminster are noted as in use for consultations.

Chaucer's serjeant "rood but hoonly" because he was travelling ; in court he had a long priest-like robe, with a furred cape about his shoulders and a scarlet hood. The gowns were various, and sometimes parti-coloured. Thus in 1555 we find each new serjeant possessed of one robe of scarlet, one of violet, one of brown and blue, one of mustard and murrey, with tabards (short sleeveless coats) of cloths of the same colours. The cape was edged, first with lambskin, afterwards with more precious stuff. In Langland's *Vision of Piers Plowman* (1362) there is mention of this dress of the serjeants, they are jibed at for their love of fees and so forth, after a fashion that is not yet extinct ! But the distinctive feature in the dress was the coif, a close-fitting head covering

covering made of white lawn or silk. A badge of honour, it was worn on all professional occasions, nor was it doffed even in the king's presence. In monumentnl effigies it is ever clearly shown. When a serjeant resigned his dignity he was formally discharged from the obligation of wearing it. To discuss its exact origin were fruitless, yet one ingenious if mistaken conjecture may be noticed. Our first lawyers were churchmen, but in 1217 these were finally debarred from general practice in the courts. Many were unwilling to abandon so lucrative a calling, but what about the tonsure? "They were for decency and comeliness allowed to cover their bald pates with a coif, which has been ever since retained." Thus the learned Serjeant Wynne in his tract on the antiquity and dignity of the order (1765). In Tudor times, if not before, fashion required the serjeant to wear a small skull-cap of black silk or velvet on the top of the coif. This is very clearly shown in one of Lord Coke's portraits. Under Charles II. lawyers, like other folk, began to wear wigs, the higher they were the bigger their perukes. It was wittily said that bench and bar went into mourning on Queen Anne's death, and so remained, since their present dress is that then adopted. Serjeants were unwilling to lose sight of their coifs altogether, and it was suggested on the wig by a round patch of black and white, representing the white coif and the cap which had covered it. The limp cap of black cloth known as the "black cap" which the judge assumes when about to pass sentence of death was, it seems, put on to veil the coif, and as a sign of sorrow. It was also carried in the hand when attending divine service, and was possibly assumed in pre-Reformation times when prayers were said for the dead.

A few words will tell of the fall of the order. As far back as 1755 Sir John Willis, chief justice of the Common Pleas, proposed to throw open that Court as well as the office of judge to barristers

barristers who were not serjeants, but the suggestion came to nothing. In 1834, the bill for the establishment of a Central Criminal Court contained a clause to open the Common Pleas ; this was dropped, but the same object was attained by a royal warrant, 25th April 1834. The legality of this was soon questioned and, after solemn argument before the Privy Council, it was declared invalid. In 1846 a statute (the 9 & 10 Vict. c. 54) to the same effect settled the matter, and the Judicature Act of 1873 provided that no judge need in future be a serjeant. On the dissolution of Serjeants' Inn its members were received back into the Houses whence they had come.

As for centuries all the judges were serjeants, the history of the order is that of the bench and bar of England ; yet some famous men rose no higher, or for one reason or other became representative members. Such a one was Sir John Maynard (1602-1690). In his last years William III. commented on his venerable appearance : "He must have outlived all the lawyers of his time." "If your Highness had not come I should have outlived the law itself," was the old man's happy compliment. Pleading in a Chancery case, he remarked that he had been counsel in the same case half a century before ; he had steered a middle course in those troubled times, but he had leant to the side of freedom against King and Protector alike. His share in the impeachment of Stafford procured him a jibe in Butler's *Hudibras*, yet it was said that all parties seemed willing to employ him, and that he seemed willing to be employed by all. Jeffreys, who usually deferred to him, once blustered out, "You are so old as to forget your law, Brother Maynard." "True, Sir George, I have forgotten more law than ever you knew," was the crushing retort. Macaulay has justly praised his conduct at the Revolution for that he urged his party to disregard legal technicalities and adopt new methods
for

for new and unheard-of circumstances. Edmund Plowden (1518–1585) deserves at least equally high praise. He was so determined a student that “for three years he went not once out of the Temple.” He is said to have refused the chancellorship offered him by Elizabeth as he would not desert the old faith. He was attacked again and again for nonconformity, but his profound knowledge of legal technicalities enabled him on each occasion to escape the net spread for him. He was an Englishman loyal to the core, and, Catholic as he was, opposed in 1555 the violent proceedings of Queen Mary’s parliament. The attorney-general filed a bill against him for contempt, but “Mr. Plowden traversed fully, and the matter was never decided.” “A traverse full of pregnancy,” is Lord Coke’s enthusiastic comment. On his death in 1585 they buried him in that Temple Church whose soil must have seemed twice sacred to this oracle of the law. An alabaster monument whereon his effigy reposes remains to this day. A less distinguished contemporary was William Bendloes (1516–1584), Old Bendloes men called him. A quaint legend reports him the only serjeant at the Common Pleas bar in the first year of Elizabeth’s reign. Whether there was no business, or merely half-guinea motions of course, or the one man argued on both sides, or whether the whole story be a fabrication, ’tis scarce worth while to inquire.

I pass to more modern times. William Davy was made serjeant-at-law in 1754. His wit combats with Lord Mansfield are still remembered. His lordship was credited with a desire to sit on Good Friday; our serjeant hinted that he would be the first judge that had done so since Pontius Pilate! Mansfield scouted one of Davy’s legal propositions. “If that be law I must burn all my books.” “Better read them first,” was the quiet answer.

In recent days two of the best known serjeants were Parry and Ballantine, the first a profound lawyer, the second a great advocate, but both are vanished from the scene. Three serjeants yet remain : Lord Esher (Master of the Rolls), Lord Justice Lindley, and Mr. Baron Pollock.

The Five Sweet Symphonies

By Nellie Syrett



Night and Love

By Ernest Wentworth

“ Ma belle nuit, oh ! sois plus lente . . . ”

O NIGHT of June, sweet Night, be long !
Look with thy million burning eyes—
See where my Love beside me lies ;
So Night of Joy, Night of my Song,
Be kind, dear Night, and long.

The Night like wild wind speedeth past ;
My Love will leave me with the Night.
Let me forget, in my delight,
Nor Night can dure, nor Love can last,
That like wild wind speed past.

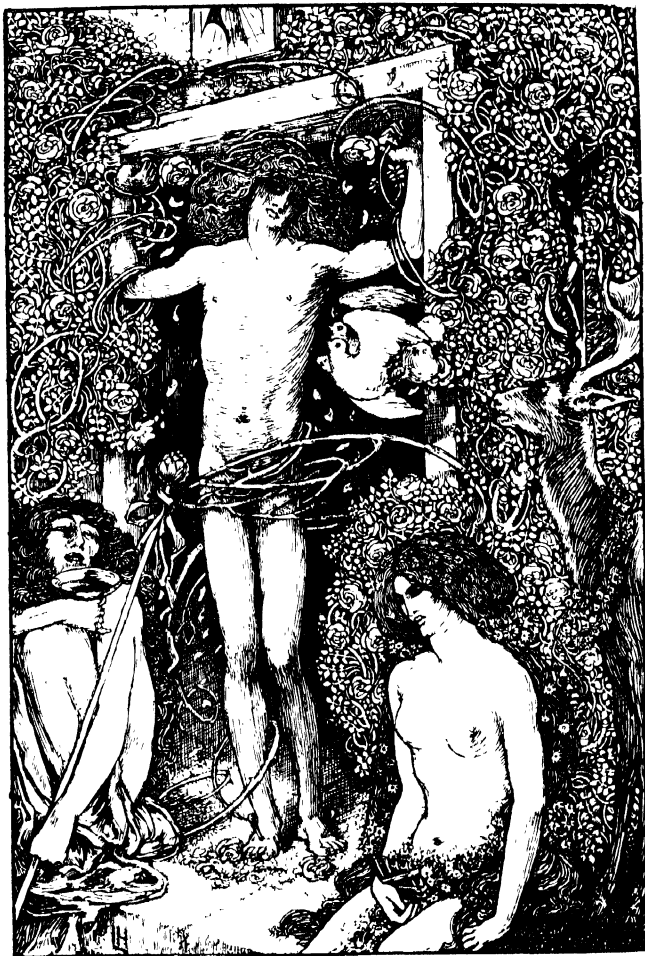
My Night was here, my Night is gone ;
The Day begins his weary flight
After the ever-fleeing Night ;
And oh, the weary, weary Dawn—
My Love, my Love is gone.

My

My Night, my Love, have left me here ;
They will not come to me again.
Let me remember, in my pain,
How sweet they were, dear God, how dear,
That once were really here.

Barren Life

By Laurence Housman



Two Stories

By Ella D'Arcy

I—The Death Mask

THE Master was dead ; and Peschi, who had come round to the studio to see about some repairs—part of the ceiling had fallen owing to the too lively proceedings of Dubourg and his eternal visitors overhead—Peschi displayed a natural pride that it was he who had been selected from among the many *mouleurs* of the Quarter, to take a mask of the dead man.

All Paris was talking of the Master, although not, assuredly, under that title. All Paris was talking of his life, of his genius, of his misery, and of his death. Peschi, for the moment, was sole possessor of valuable unedited details, to the narration of which Hiram P. Corner, who had dropped in to pass the evening with me, listened with keenly attentive ears.

Corner was a recent addition to the American Art Colony ; ingenuous as befitted his eighteen years, and of a more than improbable innocence. Paris, to him, represented the Holiest of Holies ; the dead Master, by the adorable impeccability of his writings, figuring therein as one of the High Priests. Needless to say, he had never come in contact with that High Priest, had never even seen him ; while the Simian caricatures which so

frequently embellished the newspapers, made as little impression on the lad's mind as did the unequivocal allusions, jests, and epigrams, for ever flung up like sea-spray against the rock of his unrevered name.

The absorbing interest Corner felt glowed visibly on his fresh young western face, and it was this, I imagine, which led Peschi to propose that we should go back with him to his *atelier* and see the mask for ourselves.

Peschi is a Genoese ; small, lithe, very handsome ; a skilled workman, a little demon of industry ; full of enthusiasms, with the real artist-soul. He works for Felon the sculptor, and it was Felon who had been commissioned to do the bust for which the death mask would serve as model.

It is always pleasant to hear Peschi talk ; and to-night, as we walked from the Rue Fleurus to the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs he told us something of mask-taking in general, with illustrations from this particular case.

On the preceding day, barely two hours after death had taken place, Rivereau, one of the dead man's intimates, had rushed into Peschi's workroom, and carried him off, with the necessary materials, to the Rue Monsieur, in a cab. Rivereau, though barely twenty, is perhaps the most notorious of the *bande*. Peschi described him to Corner as having dark, evil, narrow eyes set too close together in a perfectly white face, framed by falling, lustreless black hair ; and with the stooping shoulders, the troubled walk, the attenuated hands common to his class.

Arrived at the house, Rivereau led the way up the dark and dirty staircase to the topmost landing, and as they paused there an instant, Peschi could hear the long-drawn, hopeless sobs of a woman within the door.

On being admitted he found himself in an apartment
consisting

consisting of two small, inconceivably squalid rooms, opening one from the other.

In the outer room, five or six figures, the disciples, friends, and lovers of the dead poet, conversed together ; a curious group in a medley of costumes. One in an opera-hat, shirt-sleeves, and soiled grey trousers tied up with a bit of stout string ; another in a black coat buttoned high to conceal the fact that he wore no shirt at all ; a third in clothes crisp from the tailor, with an immense bunch of Parma violets in his buttonhole. But all were alike in the strangeness of their eyes, their voices, their gestures.

Seen through the open door of the further room, lay the corpse under a sheet, and by the bedside knelt the stout, middle-aged mistress, whose sobs had reached the stairs.

Madame Germaine, as she was called in the Quartet, had loved the Master with that complete, self-abnegating, sublime love of which certain women are capable—a love uniting that of the mother, the wife, and the nurse all in one. For years she had cooked for him, washed for him, mended for him ; had watched through whole nights by his bedside when he was ill ; had suffered passively his blows, his reproaches, and his neglect, when, thanks to her care, he was well again. She adored him dumbly, closed her eyes to his vices, and magnified his gifts, without in the least comprehending them. She belonged to the *ouvrière* class, could not read, could not write her own name ; but with a characteristic which is as French as it is un-British, she paid her homage to intellect, where an Englishwoman only gives it to inches and muscle. Madame Germaine was prouder perhaps of the Master's greatness, worshipped him more devoutly, than any one of the super-cultivated, ultra-corrupt group, who by their flatteries and complaisances had assisted him to his ruin.

It was with the utmost difficulty, Peschi said, that Rivereau
and

and the rest had succeeded in persuading the poor creature to leave the bedside and go into the other room while the mask was being taken.

The operation, it seems, is a sufficiently horrible one, and no relative is permitted to be present. As you cover the dead face over with the plaster, a little air is necessarily forced back again into the lungs, and this air as it passes along the windpipe causes strange rattlings, sinister noises, so that you might swear that the corpse was returned to life. Then, as the mould is removed, the muscles of the face drag and twitch, the mouth opens, the tongue lolls out ; and Peschi declared that this always remains for him a gruesome moment. He has never accustomed himself to it ; on every recurring occasion it fills him with the same repugnance ; and this, although he has taken so many masks, is so deservedly celebrated for them, that *la bande* had instantly selected him to perpetuate the Master's lineaments.

"But it's an excellent likeness," said Peschi ; "you see they sent for me so promptly that he had not changed at all. He does not look as though he were dead, but just asleep."

Meanwhile we had reached the unshuttered shop-front, where Peschi displays, on Sundays and week-days alike, his finished works of plastic art to the *gamins* and *filles* of the Quarter.

Looking past the statuary, we could see into the living-room beyond, it being separated from the shop only by a glass partition. It was lighted by a lamp set in the centre of the table, and in the circle of light thrown from beneath its green shade, we saw a charming picture : the young head of Madame Peschi bent over her baby, whom she was feeding at the breast. She is eighteen, pretty as a rose, and her story and Peschi's is an idyllic one ; to be told, perhaps, another time. She greeted us with the smiling, cordial, unaffected kindness which in France warms your blood
with

with the constant sense of brotherhood ; and, giving the boy to his father—a delicious opalescent trace of milk hanging about the little mouth—she got up to see about another lamp which Peschi had asked for.

Holding this lamp to guide our steps, he preceded us now across a dark yard to his workshop at the further end, and while we went we heard the young mother's exquisite nonsense-talk addressed to the child, as she settled back in her place again to her nursing.

Peschi, unlocking a door, flashed the light down a long room, the walls of which, the trestle-tables, the very floor, were hung, laden, and encumbered with a thousand heterogeneous objects. Casts of every description and dimension, finished, unfinished, broken ; scrolls for ceilings ; caryatides for chimney-pieces ; cornucopias for the entablatures of buildings ; chubby Cupids jostling emaciated Christs ; broken columns for Père Lachaise, or consolatory upward-pointing angels ; hands, feet, and noses for the Schools of Art ; a pensively posed *écorché* contemplating a Venus of Milo fallen upon her back ; these, and a crowd of nameless, formless things, seemed to spring at our eyes, as Peschi raised or lowered the lamp, moved it this way or the other.

"There it is," said he, pointing forwards ; and I saw lying flat upon a modelling-board, with upturned features, a grey, immobile simulacrum of the curiously mobile face I remembered so well.

"Of course you must understand," said Paschi, "it's only in the rough, just exactly as it came from the *creux*. Fifty copies are to be cast altogether, and this is the first one. But I must prop it up for you. You can't judge of it as it is."

He looked about him for a free place on which to set the lamp. Not finding any, he put it down on the floor. For a few moments he stood busied over the mask with his back to us.

"Now

"Now you can see it properly," said he, and stepped aside.

The lamp threw its rays upwards, illuminating strongly the lower portion of the cast, throwing the upper portion into deepest shadow, with the effect that the inanimate mask was become suddenly a living face, but a face so unutterably repulsive, so hideously bestial, that I grew cold to the roots of my hair. . . . A fat, loose throat, a retreating chinless chin, smeared and bleared with the impressions of the meagre beard; a vile mouth, lustful, flaccid, the lower lip disproportionately great; ignoble lines; hateful puffinesses; something inhuman and yet worse than inhuman in its travesty of humanity; something that made you hate the world and your fellows, that made you hate yourself for being ever so little in *this* image. A more abhorrent spectacle I have never seen. . . .

So soon as I could turn my eyes from the ghastly thing, I looked at Corner. He was white as the plaster faces about him. His immensely opened eyes showed his astonishment and his terror. For what I experienced was intensified in his case by the unexpected and complete disillusionment. He had opened the door of the tabernacle, and out had crawled a noisome spider; he had lifted to his lips the communion cup, and therein squatted a toad. A sort of murmur of frantic protestation began to rise in his throat; but Peschi, unconscious of our agitation, now lifted the lamp, passed round with it behind the mask, held it high, and let the rays stream downwards from above.

The astounding way the face changed must have been seen to be believed in. It was exactly as though, by some cunning sleight of hand, the mask of a god had been substituted for that of a satyr. . . . You saw a splendid dome-like head, Shakespearean in contour; a broad, smooth, finely-modelled brow; thick, regular, horizontal eyebrows, casting a shadow which diminished the too
great

great distance separating them from the eyes ; while the deeper shadow thrown below the nose altered its character entirely. Its snout-like appearance was gone, its deep, wide-open, upturned nostrils were hidden, but you noticed the well-marked transition from forehead to nose-base, the broad ridge denoting extraordinary mental power. Over the eyeballs the lids had slidden down smooth and creaseless ; the little tell-tale palpebral wrinkles which had given such libidinous lassitude to the eye had vanished away. The lips no longer looked gross, and they closed together in a beautiful, sinuous line, now first revealed by the shadow on the upper one. The prominence of the jaws, the muscularity of the lower part of the face, which gave it so painfully microcephalous an appearance, were now unnoticeable ; on the contrary, the whole face looked small beneath the noble head and brow. You remarked the medium-sized and well-formed ears, with the "swan" distinct in each, the gently-swelling breadth of head above them, the full development of the forehead over the orbits of the eyes. You discerned the presence of those higher qualities which might have rendered him an ascetic or a saint ; which led him to understand the beauty of self-denial, to appreciate the wisdom of self-restraint : and you did not see how these qualities remained inoperative in him, being completely over-balanced by the size of the lower brain, the thick, bull throat, and the immense length from the ear to the base of the skull at the back.

I had often seen the Master in life : I had seen him sipping *absinthe* at the d'Harcourt ; reeling, a Silemus-like figure, among the nocturnal Bacchantes of the Boul' Miche ; lying in the gutter outside his house, until his mistress should come to pick him up and take him in. I had seen in the living man more traces than a few of the bestiality which the death-mask had completely verified ;

verified ; but never in the living man had I suspected anything of the beauty, of the splendour, that I now saw.

For that the Master had somewhere a beautiful soul you divined from his works ; from the exquisite melody of all of them, from the pure, the ecstatic, the religious altitude of some few. But in actual daily life, his loose and violent will-power, his insane passions, held that soul bound down so close a captive, that those who knew him best were the last to admit its existence.

And here, a mere accident of lighting displayed not only that existence, but its visible, outward expression as well. In these magnificent lines and arches of head and brow, you saw what the man might have been, what God had intended him to be ; what his mother had foreseen in him, when, a tiny infant like Peschi's yonder, she had cradled the warm, downy, sweet-smelling little head upon her bosom, and dreamed day-dreams of all the high, the great, the wonderful things her boy later on was to do. You saw what the poor, purblind, middle-aged mistress was the only one to see in the seamed and ravaged face she kissed so tenderly for the last time before the coffin-lid was closed.

You saw the head of gold ; you could forget the feet of clay, or, remembering them, you found for the first time some explanation of the anomalies of his career.

You understood how he who could pour out passionate protestations of love and devotion to God in the morning, offering up body and soul, flesh and blood in his service ; dedicating his brow as a footstool for the Sacred Feet ; his hands as censers for the glowing coals, the precious incense ; condemning his eyes, misleading lights, to be extinguished by the tears of prayer ; you understood how, nevertheless, before evening was come, he would set every law of God and decency at defiance, use every member, every faculty, in the service of sin.

It

It was given to him, as it is given to few, to see the Best, to reverence it, to love it; and the blind, groping hesitatingly forward in the darkness, do not stray as far as he strayed.

He knew the value of work, its imperative necessity; that in the sweat of his brow the artist, like the day-labourer, must produce, must produce: and he spent his slothful days shambling from café to café.

He never denied his vices; he recognised them and found excuses for them, high moral reasons even, as the intellectual man can always do. To indulge them was but to follow out the dictates of Nature, who in herself is holy; cynically to expose them to the world was but to be absolutely sincere.

And his disciples, going further, taught with a vague poetic mysticism that he was a fresh Incarnation of the Godhead, that what was called his immorality was merely his scorn of truckling to the base conventions of the world. But in his saner moments he described himself more accurately as a man blown hither and thither by the winds of evil chance, just as a withered leaf is blown in autumn; and having received great and exceptional gifts, with Shakespeare's length of years in which to turn them to account, he had chosen instead to wallow in such vileness that his very name was anathema among honourable men.

Chosen? Did he choose? Can one say after all that he chose to resemble the leaf rather than the tree? The gates of gifts close on the child with the womb, and all we possess comes to us from afar, and is collected from a thousand diverging sources.

If that splendid head and brow were contained in the seed, so also were the retreating chin, the debased jaw, the animal mouth. One as much as the other was the direct inheritance of former generations. Considered in a certain aspect, it seems that a man
by

by taking thought, may as little hope to thwart the implanted propensities of his character, as to alter the shape of his skull or the size of his jawbone.

I lost myself in mazes of predestination and free-will. Life appeared to me as a huge kaleidoscope turned by the hand of Fate. The atoms of glass coalesce into patterns, fall apart, unite together again, are always the same, but always different, and, shake the glass never so slightly, the precise combination you have just been looking at is broken up for ever. It can never be repeated. This particular man, with his faults and his virtues, his unconscious brutalities, his unexpected gentlenesses, his furies of remorse ; this man with the lofty brain, the perverted tastes, the weak, irresolute, indulgent heart, will never again be met with to the end of time ; in all the endless combinations to come, this precise combination will never be found. Just as of all the faces the world will see, a face like the mask there will never again exchange glances with it.

I looked at Corner, and saw his countenance once more aglow with the joy of a recovered Ideal ; while Peschi's voice broke in on my reverie, speaking with the happy pride of the artist in a good and conscientious piece of work.

"Eh bien, how do you find it ?" said he ; "it is beautiful, is it not ?"

II—The Villa Lucienne

MADAME COETLEGON told the story, and told it so well, that her audience seemed to know the sombre alley, the neglected garden, the shuttered house, as intimately as though they had visited it themselves ; seemed to feel a faint reverberation of the incommunicable

incommunicable thrill which she had felt,—which the surly guardian, the torn rag of lace, the closed pavilion had made her feel. And yet, as you will see, there is in reality no story at all ; it is merely an account of how, when in the Riviera two winters ago, she went with some friends to look over a furnished villa, which one of them thought of taking.

It was afternoon when we started on our expedition, Madame de M——, Cécile her widowed daughter-in-law, and I. Cécile's little girl Renée, the nurse, and Médor, the boarhound of which poor Guy had been so inordinately fond, dawdled after us up the steep and sunny road.

The December day was deliciously blue and warm. Cécile took off her furs and carried them over her arm. We only put down our sunshades when a screen of olive-trees on the left interposed their grey-green foliage between the sunshine and us.

Up in these trees barefooted men armed with bamboos were beating the branches to knock down the fruit ; and three generations of women, grandmothers, wives, and children, knelt in the grass, gathering up the little purplish olives into baskets. All paused to follow us with black persistent eyes, as we passed by ; only the men went on working unmoved. The tap-tapping, swish-swishing, of their light sticks against the boughs played a characteristically southern accompaniment to our desultory talk.

We were reasonably happy, pleasantly exhilarated by the beauty of the weather and the scene. Renée and Médor, with shrill laughter and deep-mouthed joy-notes, played together the whole way. And when the garden wall, which now replaced the olive-trees upon our right, gave place to a couple of iron gates standing open

open upon a broad straight drive, and we, looking up between the overarching palm-trees and cocoanuts, saw a white, elegant, sun-bathed house at the end, Cécile jumped to the conclusion that here was the Villa Lucienne, and that nowhere else could she find a house which on the face of it would suit her better.

But the woman who came to greet us, the jocund, brown-faced young woman, with the superb abundance of bosom beneath her crossed neckkerchief of orange-coloured wool, told us no; this was the Villa Soleil (appropriate name!) and belonged to Monsieur Morgera, the deputy who was now in Paris. The Villa Lucienne was higher up; she pointed vaguely behind her through the house: a long walk round by the road. But if these ladies did not mind a path which was a trifle damp perhaps, owing to Monday's rain, they would find themselves in five minutes at the Villa, for the two houses in reality were not more than a stone's-throw apart.

She conducted us across a spacious garden golden with sunshine, lyric with bird-song, brilliant with flowers, where eucalyptus, mimosa, and tea-roses interwove their strong and subtle perfumes through the air, to an angle in a remote laurel hedge. Here she stooped to pull aside some ancient pine-boughs which ineffectually closed the entrance to a dark and trellised walk. Peering up it, it seemed to stretch away interminably into green gloom, the ground rising a little all the while, and the steepness of the ascent being modified every here and there by a couple of rotting wooden steps.

We were to go up this alley, our guide told us, and we would be sure to find Laurent at the top. Laurent, she explained to us, was the gardener who lived at the Villa Lucienne and showed it to visitors. But there were not many who came, although it had been to let an immense time, ever since the death of old Madame

Gray,

Gray, and that had occurred before she, the speaker, had come south with the Morgeras. We were to explain to Laurent that we had been sent up from the Villa Soleil, and then it would be all right. For he sometimes used the alley himself, as it gave him a short cut into Antibes ; but the passage had been blocked up many years ago, to prevent the Morgera children running into it.

Oh, Madame was very kind, it was no trouble at all, and of course if these ladies liked they could return by the alley also ; but once they found themselves at the Villa they would be close to the upper road, which they would probably prefer. Then came her cordial voice calling after Cécile, "Madame had best put on her furs again, it is cold in there."

It was cold, and damp, too, with the damp coldness of places where sun and wind never penetrate. It was so narrow that we had to walk in single file. The walls close on either hand, the low roof above our heads, were formed of trellised woodwork now dropping into complete decay. But these might have been removed altogether, and the alley would still have retained its form ; for the creepers which overgrew it had with time developed gnarled trunks and branches, which formed a second natural tunnelling outside. Through the broken places in the woodwork we could see the thick, inextricably twisted stems ; and outside again was a tangled matting of greenery that suffered no drop of sunlight to trickle through. The ground was covered with lichens, deathstool, and a spongy moss exuding water beneath the foot, and one had the consciousness that the whole place, floor, walls, and roof, must creep with the repulsive, slimy, running life which pullulates in dark and solitary places.

The change from the gay and scented garden to this dark alley, heavy with the smells of moisture and decay, was curiously depressing. We followed each other in silence ; first Cécile ;
then

then Renée clinging to her nurse's hand, with Médor pressing close against them ; Madame de M—— next ; and I brought up the rear.

One would have pronounced it impossible to find in any southern garden so sombre a place, but that, after all, it is only in the south that such extraordinary contrasts of gaiety and gloom ever present themselves.

The sudden tearing away of a portion of one of the wooden steps beneath my tread startled us all, and the circular scatter of an immense colony of wood-lice that had formed its habitat in the crevices of the wood filled me with shivering disgust. I was exceedingly glad when we emerged from the tunnel upon daylight again and the Villa.

Upon daylight, but not upon sunlight, for the small garden in which we found ourselves was ringed round by the compact tops of the umbrella-pines which climbed the hill on every side. The site had been chosen of course on account of the magnificent view which we knew must be obtainable from the Villa windows, though from where we stood we could see nothing but the dark trees, the wild garden, the overshadowed house. And we saw none of these things very distinctly, for our attention was focussed on the man standing stolidly there in the middle of the garden, and evidently knee-deep in the grass, awaiting us.

He was a short, thick-set peasant, dressed in the immensely wide blue velveteen trousers, the broad crimson sash, and the flannel shirt, open at the throat, which are customary in these parts. He was strong-necked as a bull, dark as a mulatto, and his curling, grizzled hair was thickly matted over head and face and breast. He wore a flat knitted cap, and held the inevitable cigarette between his lips, but he made no attempt to remove one or the other at our approach. He stood motionless, silent, his
hands

hands thrust deep into his pockets, staring at us, and shifting from one to another his suspicious and truculent little eyes.

So far as I was concerned, and though the Villa had proved a palace, I should have preferred abandoning the quest at once to going over it in his company ; but Cécile addressed him with intrepid politeness.

"We had been permitted to come up from the Villa Soleil. We understood that the Villa Lucienne was to let furnished ; if so, might we look over it ? "

From his heavy, expressionless expression, one might have supposed that the very last thing he expected or desired was to find a tenant for the Villa, and I thought with relief that he was going to refuse Cécile's request. But, after a longish pause :

"Yes, you can see it," he said, grudgingly, and turned from us, to disappear into the lower part of the house.

We looked into each other's disconcerted faces, then round the grey and shadowy garden in which we stood : a garden long since gone to ruin, with paths and flower-beds inextricably mingled, with docks and nettles choking up the rose-trees run wild, with wind-planted weeds growing from the stone vases on the terrace, with grasses pushing between the marble steps leading up to the hall door.

In the middle of the garden a terra-cotta faun, tumbled from his pedestal, grinned sardonically up from amidst the tangled greenery, and Madame de M—— began to quote :

"Un vieux faune en terre-cuite
Rit au centre des boulingrins,
Présageant sans doute une fuite
De ces instants sereins
Qui m'ont conduit et t'ont conduite . . ."

The Villa itself was as dilapidated, as mournful-looking as the garden. The ground-floor alone gave signs of occupation, in a checked shirt spread out upon a window-ledge to dry, in a worn besom, an earthenware pipkin, and a pewter jug, ranged against the wall. But the upper part, with the yellow plaster crumbling from the walls, the grey-painted persiennes all monotonously closed, said with a thousand voices it was never opened, never entered, had not been lived in for years.

Our surly gardener reappeared, carrying some keys. He led the way up the steps. We exchanged mute questions ; all desire to inspect the Villa was gone. But Cécile is a woman of character : she devoted herself.

"I'll just run up and see what it is like," she said ; "it's not worth while you should tire yourself too, Mamma. You, all, wait here."

We stood at the foot of the steps ; Laurent was already at the top. Cécile began to mount lightly towards him, but before she was half-way she turned, and to our surprise, "I wish you would come up all of you," she said, and stopped there until we joined her.

Laurent fitted a key to the door, and it opened with a shriek of rusty hinges. As he followed us, pulling it to behind him, we found ourselves in total darkness. I assure you I went through a bad quarter of a minute. Then we heard the turning of a handle, an inner door was opened, and in the semi-daylight of closed shutters we saw the man's squat figure going from us down a long, old-fashioned, vacant drawing-room towards two windows at the further end.

At the same instant Renée burst into tears :

"Oh, I don't like it. Oh, I'm frightened !" she sobbed.

"Little goosie !" said her grandmother, "see, it's quite light
now !"

now !” for Laurent had pushed back the persiennes, and a magical panorama had sprung into view ; the whole range of the mountains behind Nice, their snow-caps suffused with a heavenly rose colour by the setting sun.

But Renée only clutched tighter at Madame de M——’s gown, and wept :

“ Oh, I don’t like it, *Bonne-maman* ! She is looking at me still. I want to go home !”

“ No one is looking at you,” her grandmother told her, “ talk to your friend Médor. He’ll take care of you.”

But Renée whispered :

“ He wouldn’t come in ; he’s frightened too.”

And, listening, we heard the dog’s impatient and complaining bark calling to us from the garden.

Cécile sent Renée and the nurse to join him, and while Laurent let them out, we stepped on to the terrace, and for a moment our hearts were eased by the incomparable beauty of the view, for raised now above the tree-tops, we looked over the admirable bay, the illimitable sky ; we feasted our eyes upon unimaginable colour, upon matchless form. We were almost prepared to declare that the possession of the Villa was a piece of good fortune not to be let slip, when we heard a step behind us, and turned to see Laurent surveying us morosely from the window threshold, and again to experience the oppression of his ungenial personality.

Under his guidance we now inspected the century-old furniture, the faded silks, the tarnished gilt, the ragged brocades, which had once embellished the room. The oval mirrors were dim with mildew, the parquet floor might have been a mere piece of grey drugget, so thick was the overlying dust. Curtains, yellowish, ropery, of undeterminable material, hung forlornly where once they had draped windows and doors. Originally they

may have been of rose satin, for there were traces of rose colour still on the walls and the ceiling, painted in gay southern fashion with loves and doves, festoons of flowers, and knots of ribbons. But these paintings were all fragmentary, indistinct, seeming to lose sequence and outline the more diligently you tried to decipher them.

Yet you could not fail to see that when first furnished the room must have been charming and coquettish. I wondered for whom it had been thus arranged, why it had been thus abandoned. For there grew upon me, I cannot tell you why, the curious conviction that the last inhabitant of the room having casually left it, had, from some unexpected obstacle, never again returned. They were but the merest trifles that created this idea ; the tiny heaps of brown ash which lay on a marble guéridon, the few withered twigs in the vase beside it, spoke of the last rose plucked from the garden ; the big berceuse chair drawn out beside the sculptured mantelpiece seemed to retain the impression of the last occupant ; and in the dark recesses of the unclosed hearth my fancy detected smouldering heat in the half-charred logs of wood.

The other rooms in the villa resembled the *salon* ; each time our surly guide opened the shutters we saw a repetition of the ancient furniture, of the faded decoration ; everything dust-covered and time-decayed. Nor in these other rooms was any sign of former occupation to be seen, until, caught upon the *girandole* of a pier-glass, a long ragged fragment of lace seized my eye ; an exquisitely fine and cobwebby piece of lace, as though caught and torn from some gala shawl or flounce, as the wearer had hurried by.

It was odd perhaps to see this piece of lace caught thus, but not odd enough surely to account for the strange emotion which
seized

seized hold of me : an overwhelming pity, succeeded by an overwhelming fear. I had had a momentary intention to point the lace out to the others, but a glance at Laurent froze the words on my lips. Never in my life have I experienced such a paralysing fear. I was filled with an intense desire to get away from the man and from the Villa.

But Madame de M—— looking from the window, had noticed a pavilion standing isolated in the garden. She inquired if it were to be let with the house. Then she supposed we could visit it. No, said the man, that was impossible. But she insisted it was only right that tenants should see the whole of the premises for which they would have to pay, but he refused this time with such rudeness, his little brutish eyes narrowed with such malignancy, that the panic which I had just experienced now seized the others, and it was a *sauve-qui-peut*.

We gathered up Renée, nurse, and Médor in our hasty passage through the garden, and found our way unguided to the gate upon the upper road.

And once at large beneath the serene evening sky, winding slowly westward down the olive bordered ways : "What an odious old ruffian !" said one ; "What an eerie, uncanny place !" said another. We compared notes. We found that each of us had been conscious of the same immense, the same inexplicable sense of fear.

Cécile, the least nervous of women, had felt it the first. It had laid hold of her when going up the steps to the door, and it had been so real a terror, she explained to us, that if we had not joined her she would have turned back. Nothing could have induced her to enter the Villa alone.

Madame de M——'s account was that her mind had been more or less troubled from the first moment of entering the garden,

garden, but that when the man refused us access to the pavilion, it had been suddenly invaded by a most intolerable sense of something wrong. Being very imaginative (poor Guy undoubtedly derived his extraordinary gifts from her), Madame de M—— was convinced that the gardener had murdered some one and buried the body inside the pavilion.

But for me it was not so much the personality of the man—although I admitted he was unprepossessing enough—as the Villa itself which inspired fear. Fear seemed to exude from the walls, to dim the mirrors with its clammy breath, to stir shudderingly among the tattered draperies, to impregnate the whole atmosphere as with an essence, a gas, a contagious disease. You fought it off for a shorter or longer time, according to your powers of resistance, but you were bound to succumb to it at last. The oppressive and invisible fumes had laid hold of us one after the other, and the incident of the closed pavilion had raised our terrors to a ludicrous pitch.

Nurse's experiences, which she gave us a day or two later, supported this view. For she told us that when Renée began to cry, and she took her hand to lead her out, all at once she felt quite nervous and uncomfortable too, as though the little one's trouble had passed by touch into her.

"And what is strange too," said she, "when we reached the garden, there was Médor, his forepaws planted firmly on the ground, his whole body rigid, and his hair bristling all along his backbone from end to end."

Nurse was convinced that both the child and the dog had seen something we others could not see.

This reminded us of a word of Renée's, a very curious word :

"I don't like it, *she* is looking at me still,"—and Cécile undertook to question her.

"You

"You remember, Renée, when mother took you the other day to look over the pretty Villa——"

Renée opened wide, mute eyes.

"Why did you cry?"

"I was frightened of the lady," she whispered.

"Where was the lady?" asked Cécile.

"She was in the drawing-room, sitting in the big chair."

"Was she an old lady like grandmamma, or a young lady like mother?"

"She was like Bonnemaman," said Renée, and her little mouth began to quiver.

"And what did she do?"

"She got up and began to—to come——"

But here Renée burst into tears again. And as she is a very nervous, excitable child, we had to drop the subject.

But what it all meant, whether there was anything in the history of the house or of its guardian which could account for our sensations, we never knew. We made inquiries of course concerning Laurent and the Villa Lucienne, but we learned very little, and that little was so vague, so remote, so irrelevant, that it does not seem worth while repeating.

The indisputable fact is the overwhelming fear which the adventure awoke in each and all of us; and this effect is impossible to describe, being just the crystallisation of one of those subtle, unformulated emotions in which only poor Guy himself could have hoped to succeed.

Windermere

By Charles Conder



Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady

By Vernon Lee

[To H.H. the Ranee Brooke of Saràwak]

IN the year 1701, the Duchy of Luna became united to the Italian dominions of the Holy Roman Empire, owing to the extinction of its famous ducal house in the persons of Duke Balthasar Maria and of his grandson Alberic, who should have been third of the name. Under this dry historical fact lies hidden the strange story of Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady.

I

The first act of hostility of old Duke Balthasar towards the Snake Lady, in whose existence he did not, of course, believe, was connected with the arrival at Luna of certain tapestries after the designs of the famous Monsieur Le Brun, a present from his most Christian Majesty King Lewis the XIV. These Gobelins, which represented the marriage of Alexander and Roxana, were placed in the throne room, and in the most gallant suit of chambers overlooking the great rockery garden, all of which had been completed by Duke Balthasar Maria in 1680; and, as a
consequence,

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consequence, the already existing tapestries, silk hangings and mirrors painted by Marius of the Flowers, were transferred into other apartments, thus occasioning a general re-hanging of the Red Palace at Luna. These magnificent operations, in which, as the court poets sang, Apollo and the Graces lent their services to their beloved patron, aroused in Duke Balthasar's mind a sudden curiosity to see what might be made of the rooms occupied by his grandson and heir, and which he had not entered since Prince Alberic's christening. He found the apartments in a shocking state of neglect, and the youthful prince unspeakably shy and rustic; and he determined to give him at once an establishment befitting his age, to look out presently for a princess worthy to be his wife, and, somewhat earlier, for a less illustrious but more agreeable lady to fashion his manners. Meanwhile, Duke Balthasar Maria gave orders to change the tapestry in Prince Alberic's chamber. This tapestry was of old and Gothic taste, extremely worn, and represented Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady Oriana, alluded to in the poems of Boiardo and the chronicles of the Crusaders. Duke Balthasar Maria was a prince of enlightened mind and delicate taste; the literature as well as the art of the dark ages found no grace in his sight; he reproved the folly of feeding the thoughts of youth on improbable events; besides, he disliked snakes and was afraid of the devil. So he ordered the tapestry to be removed and another, representing Susanna and the Elders, to be put in its stead. But when Prince Alberic discovered the change, he cut Susanna and the Elders into strips with a knife he had stolen out of the ducal kitchens (no dangerous instruments being allowed to young princes before they were of an age to learn to fence) and refused to touch his food for three days.

The tapestry over which little Prince Alberic mourned so
greatly

greatly had indeed been both tattered and Gothic. But for the boy it possessed an inexhaustible charm. It was quite full of things, and they were all delightful. The sorely frayed borders consisted of wonderful garlands of leaves, and fruits, and flowers, tied at intervals with ribbons, although they seemed all to grow, like tall, narrow bushes, each from a big vase in the bottom corner ; and made of all manner of different plants. There were bunches of spiky bays, and of acorned oakleaves, sheaves of lilies and heads of poppies, gourds, and apples and pears, and hazelnuts and mulberries, wheat ears, and beans, and pine tufts. And in each of these plants, of which those above named are only a very few, there were curious live creatures of some sort—various birds, big and little, butterflies on the lilies, snails, squirrels, and mice, and rabbits, and even a hare, with such pointed ears, darting among the spruce fir. Alberic learned the names of most of these plants and creatures from his nurse, who had been a peasant, and spent much ingenuity seeking for them in the palace gardens and terraces ; but there were no live creatures there, except snails and toads, which the gardeners killed, and carp swimming about in the big tank, whom Alberic did not like, and who were not in the tapestry ; and he had to supplement his nurse's information by that of the grooms and scullions, when he could visit them secretly. He was even promised a sight, one day, of a dead rabbit—the rabbit was the most fascinating of the inhabitants of the tapestry border—but he came to the kitchen too late, and saw it with its pretty fur pulled off, and looking so sad and naked that it made him cry. But Alberic had grown so accustomed to never quitting the Red Palace and its gardens, that he was usually satisfied with seeing the plants and animals in the tapestry, and looked forward to seeing the real things when he should be grown up. “When I am a man,” he would say to himself—for his nurse scolded him

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him for saying it to her—"I will have a live rabbit of my own."

The border of the tapestry interested Prince Alberic most when he was very little—indeed, his remembrance of it was older than that of the Red Palace, its terraces and gardens—but gradually he began to care more and more for the pictures in the middle.

There were mountains, and the sea with ships ; and these first made him care to go on to the topmost palace terrace and look at the real mountains and the sea beyond the roofs and gardens ; and there were woods of all manner of tall trees, with clover and wild strawberries growing beneath them, and roads, and paths, and rivers, in and out—these were rather confused with the places where the tapestry was worn out, and with the patches and mendings thereof, but Alberic, in the course of time, contrived to make them all out, and knew exactly whence the river came which turned the big mill wheel, and how many bends it made before coming to the fishing nets ; and how the horsemen must cross over the bridge, then wind behind the cliff with the chapel, and pass through the wood of firs in order to get from the castle in the left hand corner nearest the bottom to the town, over which the sun was shining with all its beams, and a wind blowing with inflated cheeks on the right hand close to the top.

The centre of the tapestry was the most worn and discoloured ; and it was for this reason perhaps that little Alberic scarcely noticed it for some years, his eye and mind led away by the bright red and yellow of the border of fruit and flowers, and the still vivid green and orange of the background landscape. Red, yellow and orange, even green, had faded in the centre into pale blue and lilac ; even the green had grown an odd dusky tint ; and the figures seemed like ghosts, sometimes emerging and then receding again into vagueness. Indeed, it was only as he grew bigger that Alberic began

began to see any figures at all ; and then, for a long time he would lose sight of them. But little by little, when the light was strong, he could see them always ; and even in the dark make them out with a little attention. Among the spruce firs and pines, and against a hedge of roses, on which there still lingered a remnant of redness, a knight had reined in his big white horse, and was putting one arm round the shoulder of a lady, who was leaning against the horse's flank. The knight was all dressed in armour—not at all like that of the equestrian statue of Duke Balthasar Maria in the square, but all made of plates, with plates also on the legs, instead of having them bare like Duke Balthasar's statue ; and on his head he had no wig, but a helmet with big plumes. It seemed a more reasonable dress than the other, but probably Duke Balthasar was right to go to battle with bare legs and a kilt and a wig, since he did so. The lady who was looking up into his face was dressed with a high collar and long sleeves, and on her head she wore a thick circular garland, from under which the hair fell about her shoulders. She was very lovely, Alberic got to think, particularly when, having climbed upon a chest of drawers, he saw that her hair was still full of threads of gold, some of them quite loose because the tapestry was so rubbed. The knight and his horse were of course very beautiful, and he liked the way in which the knight reined in the horse with one hand, and embraced the lady with the other arm. But Alberic got to love the lady most, although she was so very pale and faded, and almost the colour of the moonbeams through the palace windows in summer. Her dress also was so beautiful and unlike those of the ladies who got out of the coaches in the Court of Honour, and who had on hoops and no clothes at all on their upper part. This lady, on the contrary, had that collar like a lily, and a beautiful gold chain, and patterns in gold (Alberic made them out little by little) all over her

her

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her bodice. He got to want so much to see her skirt ; it was probably very beautiful too, but it so happened that the inlaid chest of drawers before mentioned stood against the wall in that place, and on it a large ebony and ivory crucifix, which covered the lower part of the lady's body. Alberic often tried to lift off the crucifix, but it was a great deal too heavy, and there was not room on the chest of drawers to push it aside ; so the lady's skirt and feet remained invisible. But one day, when Alberic was eleven, his nurse suddenly took a fancy to having all the furniture shifted. It was time that the child should cease to sleep in her room, and plague her with his loud talking in his dreams. And she might as well have the handsome inlaid chest of drawers, and that nice pious crucifix for herself next door, in place of Alberic's little bed. So one morning there was a great shifting and dusting, and when Alberic came in from his walk on the terrace, there hung the tapestry entirely uncovered. He stood for a few minutes before it, riveted to the ground. Then he ran to his nurse, exclaiming, "Oh, nurse, dear nurse, look—the lady——!"

For where the big crucifix had stood, the lower part of the beautiful pale lady with the gold thread hair was now exposed. But instead of a skirt, she ended off in a big snake's tail, with scales of still most vivid (the tapestry not having faded there) green and gold.

The nurse turned round.

"Holy Virgin," she cried, "why she's a serpent!" Then noticing the boy's violent excitement, she added, "You little ninny, it's only Duke Alberic the Blond, who was your ancestor, and the Snake Lady."

Little Prince Alberic asked no questions, feeling that he must not. Very strange it was, but he loved the beautiful lady with the thread of gold hair only the more because she ended off in the
long

long twisting body of a snake. And that, no doubt, was why the knight was so very good to her.

II

For want of that tapestry, poor Alberic, having cut its successor to pieces, began to pine away. It had been his whole world; and now it was gone he discovered that he had no other. No one had ever cared for him except his nurse, who was very cross. Nothing had ever been taught him except the Latin catechism; he had had nothing to make a pet of except the fat carp, supposed to be four hundred years old, in the tank; he had nothing to play with except a gala coral with bells by Benvenuto Cellini, which Duke Balthasar Maria had sent him on his eighth birthday. He had never had anything except a grandfather, and had never been outside the Red Palace.

Now, after the loss of the tapestry, the disappearance of the plants and flowers and birds and beasts on its borders, and the departure of the kind knight on the horse and the dear golden-haired Snake Lady, Alberic became aware that he had always hated both his grandfather and the Red Palace.

The whole world, indeed, were agreed that Duke Balthasar was the most magnanimous and fascinating of monarchs; and that the Red Palace of Luna was the most magnificent and delectable of residences. But the knowledge of this universal opinion, and the consequent sense of his own extreme unworthiness, merely exasperated Alberic's detestation, which, as it grew, came to identify the Duke and the Palace as the personification and visible manifestation of each other. He knew now—oh how well—every time that he walked on the terrace or in the garden (at the hours when no one else ever entered them) that he had always abominated

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abominated the brilliant tomato-coloured plaster which gave the palace its name: such a pleasant, gay colour, people would remark, particularly against the blue of the sky. Then there were the Twelve Cæsars—they were the Twelve Cæsars, but multiplied over and over again—busts with flying draperies and spiky garlands, one over every first floor window, hundreds of them, all fluttering and grimacing round the place. Alberic had always thought them uncanny; but now he positively avoided looking out of the window, lest his eye should catch the stucco eyeball of one of those Cæsars in the opposite wing of the building. But there was one thing more especially in the Red Palace, of which a bare glimpse had always filled the youthful Prince with terror, and which now kept recurring to his mind like a nightmare. This was no other than the famous grotto of the Court of Honour. Its roof was ingeniously inlaid with oyster shells, forming elegant patterns, among which you could plainly distinguish some colossal satyrs; the sides were built of rockery, and in its depths, disposed in a most natural and tasteful manner, was a herd of lifesize animals all carved out of various precious marbles. On holidays the water was turned on, and spurted about in a gallant fashion. On such occasions persons of **taste** would flock to Luna from all parts of the world to enjoy the spectacle. But ever since his earliest infancy Prince Alberic had held this grotto in abhorrence. The oyster shell satyrs on the roof frightened him into fits, particularly when the fountains were playing; and his terror of the marble animals was such that a bare allusion to the Porphyry Rhinoceros, the Giraffe of Cipollino, and the Verde Antique Monkeys, set him screaming for an hour. The grotto, moreover, had become associated in his mind with the other great glory of the Red Palace, to wit, the domed chapel in which Duke Balthasar Maria intended erecting monuments to
his

his immediate ancestors, and in which he had already prepared a monument for himself. And the whole magnificent palace, grotto, chapel and all, had become mysteriously connected with Alberic's grandfather, owing to a particularly terrible dream. When the boy was eight years old, he was taken one day to see his grandfather. It was the feast of St. Balthasar, one of the Three Wise Kings from the East, as is well known. There had been firing of mortars and ringing of bells ever since daybreak. Alberic had his hair curled, was put into new clothes (his usual raiment was somewhat tattered), a large nosegay was put in his hand, and he and his nurse were conveyed by complicated relays of lackeys and of pages up to the Ducal apartments. Here, in a crowded outer room, he was separated from his nurse and received by a gaunt person in a long black robe like a sheath, and a long shovel hat, whom Alberic identified many years later as his grandfather's Jesuit confessor. He smiled a long smile, discovering a prodigious number of teeth, in a manner which froze the child's blood; and lifting an embroidered curtain, pushed Alberic into his grandfather's presence. Duke Balthasar Maria, known as the Ever Young Prince in all Italy, was at his toilet. He was wrapped in a green Chinese wrapper, embroidered with gold pagodas, and round his head was tied an orange scarf of delicate fabric. He was listening to the performance of some fiddlers, and of a lady dressed as a nymph, who was singing the birthday ode with many shrill trills and quavers; and meanwhile his face, in the hands of a valet, was being plastered with a variety of brilliant colours. In his green and gold wrapper and orange head-dress, with the strange patches of vermilion and white on his cheeks, Duke Balthasar looked to the diseased fancy of his grandson as if he had been made of various precious metals, like the celebrated effigy he had erected of himself in the great burial chapel. But, just as
Alberic

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Alberic was mustering up courage and approaching his magnificent grandparent, his eye fell upon a sight so mysterious and terrible that he fled wildly out of the Ducal presence. For through an open door he could see in an adjacent closet a man dressed in white, combing the long flowing locks of what he recognised as his grandfather's head, stuck on a short pole in the light of a window.

That night Alberic had seen in his dreams the ever young Duke Balthasar Maria descend from his niche in the burial-chapel; and, with his Roman lappets and corslet visible beneath the green bronze cloak embroidered with gold pagodas, march down the great staircase into the Court of Honour, and ascend to the empty place at the end of the rockery grotto (where, as a matter of fact, a statue of Neptune, by a pupil of Bernini, was placed some months later), and there, raising his sceptre, receive the obeisance of all the marble animals—the giraffe, the rhinoceros, the stag, the peacock, and the monkeys. And behold! suddenly his well-known features waxed dim, and beneath the great curly peruke there was a round blank thing—a barber's block!

Alberic, who was an intelligent child, had gradually learned to disentangle this dream from reality; but its grotesque terror never vanished from his mind, and became the core of all his feelings towards Duke Balthasar Maria and the Red Palace.

III

The news—which was kept back as long as possible—of the destruction of Susanna and the Elders threw Duke Balthasar Maria into a most violent rage with his grandson. The boy should be punished by exile, and exile to a terrible place; above all, to a place

place where there was no furniture to destroy. Taking due counsel with his Jesuit, his Jester, and his Dwarf, Duke Balthasar decided that in the whole Duchy of Luna there was no place more fitted for the purpose than the Castle of Sparkling Waters.

For the Castle of Sparkling Waters was little better than a ruin, and its sole inhabitants were a family of peasants. The original cradle of the House of Luna, and its principal bulwark against invasion, the castle had been ignominiously discarded and forsaken a couple of centuries before, when the dukes had built the rectangular town in the plain; after which it had been used as a quarry for ready cut stone, and the greater part carted off to rebuild the city of Luna, and even the central portion of the Red Palace. The castle was therefore reduced to its outer circuit of walls, enclosing vineyards and orange-gardens, instead of moats and yards and towers, and to the large gate tower, which had been kept, with one or two smaller buildings, for the housing of the farmer, his cattle, and his stores.

Thither the misguided young prince was conveyed in a carefully shuttered coach and at a late hour of the evening, as was proper in the case of an offender at once so illustrious and so criminal. Nature, moreover, had clearly shared Duke Balthasar Maria's legitimate anger, and had done her best to increase the horror of this just though terrible sentence. For that particular night the long summer broke up in a storm of fearful violence; and Alberic entered the ruined castle amid the howling of wind, the rumble of thunder, and the rush of torrents of rain.

But the young prince showed no fear or reluctance; he saluted with dignity and sweetness the farmer and his wife and family, and took possession of his attic, where the curtains of an antique and crazy four-poster shook in the draught of the unglazed windows, as if he were taking possession of the gala chambers of

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a great palace. "And so," he merely remarked, looking round him with reserved satisfaction, "I am now in the castle which was built by my ancestor and namesake, Alberic the Blond."

He looked not unworthy of such illustrious lineage, as he stood there in the flickering light of the pine torch: tall for his age, slender and strong, with abundant golden hair falling about his very white face.

That first night at the Castle of Sparkling Waters, Alberic dreamed without end about his dear, lost tapestry. And when, in the radiant autumn morning, he descended to explore the place of his banishment and captivity, it seemed as if those dreams were still going on. Or had the tapestry been removed to this spot, and become a reality in which he himself was running about?

The guard tower in which he had slept was still intact and chivalrous. It had battlements, a drawbridge, a great escutcheon with the arms of Luna, just like the castle in the tapestry. Some vines, quite loaded with grapes, rose on the strong cords of their fibrous wood from the ground to the very roof of the tower, exactly like those borders of leaves and fruit which Alberic had loved so much. And, between the vines, all along the masonry, were strung long narrow ropes of maize, like garlands of gold. A plantation of orange trees filled what had once been the moat; lemons were spalliered against the delicate pink brickwork. There were no lilies, but big carnations hung down from the tower windows, and a tall oleander, which Alberic mistook for a special sort of rose-tree, shed its blossoms on to the drawbridge. After the storm of the night, birds were singing all round; not indeed as they sang in spring, which Alberic, of course, did not know, but in a manner quite different from the canaries in the ducal aviaries at Luna. Moreover other birds, wonderful white
and

and gold creatures, some of them with brilliant tails and scarlet crests, were pecking and strutting and making curious noises in the yard. And—could it be true?—a little way further up the hill, for the castle walls climbed steeply from the seaboard, in the grass beneath the olive trees, white creatures were running in and out—white creatures with pinkish lining to their ears, undoubtedly—as Alberic's nurse had taught him on the tapestry—undoubtedly *rabbits*.

Thus Alberic rambled on, from discovery to discovery, with the growing sense that he was in the tapestry, but that the tapestry had become the whole world. He climbed from terrace to terrace of the steep olive yard, among the sage and the fennel tufts, the long red walls of the castle winding ever higher on the hill. And, on the very top of the hill was a high terrace surrounded by towers, and a white shining house with columns and windows, which seemed to drag him upwards.

It was, indeed, the citadel of the place, the very centre of the castle.

Alberic's heart beat strangely as he passed beneath the wide arch of delicate ivy-grown brick, and clambered up the rough paved path to the topmost terrace. And there he actually forgot the tapestry. The terrace was laid out as a vineyard, the vines trellised on the top of stone columns; at one end stood a clump of trees, pines, and a big ilex and a walnut, whose shrivelled leaves already strewed the grass. To the back stood a tiny little house all built of shining marble, with two large rounded windows divided by delicate pillars, of the sort (as Alberic later learned) which people built in the barbarous days of the Goths. Among the vines, which formed a vast arbour, were growing, in open spaces, large orange and lemon trees, and flowering bushes of rosemary, and pale pink roses. And in front of the house, under
a great

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a great umbrella pine, was a well, with an arch over it and a bucket hanging to a chain.

Alberic wandered about in the vineyard, and then slowly mounted the marble staircase which flanked the white house. There was no one in it. The two or three small upper chambers stood open, and on their blackened floor were heaped sacks, and faggots, and fodder, and all manner of coloured seeds. The unglazed windows stood open, framing in between their white pillars a piece of deep blue sea. For there, below, but seen over the tops of the olive trees and the green leaves of the oranges and lemons, stretched the sea, deep blue, speckled with white sails, bounded by pale blue capes and arched over by a dazzling pale blue sky. From the lower story there rose faint sounds of cattle, and a fresh, sweet smell as of cut grass and herbs and coolness, which Alberic had never known before.

How long did Alberic stand at that window? He was startled by what he took to be steps close behind him, and a rustle as of silk. But the rooms were empty, and he could see nothing moving among the stacked up fodder and seeds. Still, the sounds seemed to recur, but now outside, and he thought he heard someone in a very low voice call his name. He descended into the vineyard; he walked round every tree and every shrub, and climbed upon the broken masses of rose-coloured masonry, crushing the scented rag-wort and peppermint with which they were overgrown. But all was still and empty. Only, from far, far below, there rose a stave of peasant's song.

The great gold balls of oranges, and the delicate yellow lemons, stood out among their glossy green against the deep blue of the sea; the long bunches of grapes, hung, filled with sunshine, like clusters of rubies and jacinths and topazes, from the trellis which patterned the pale blue sky. But Alberic felt not
hunger

hunger, but sudden thirst, and mounted the three broken marble steps of the well. By its side was a long narrow trough of marble, such as stood in the court at Luna, and which, Alberic had been told, people had used as coffins in pagan times. This one was evidently intended to receive water from the well, for it had a mask in the middle, with a spout; but it was quite dry and full of wild herbs and even of pale, prickly roses. There were garlands carved upon it, and people twisting snakes about them; and the carving was picked out with golden brown minute mosses. Alberic looked at it, for it pleased him greatly; and then he lowered the bucket into the deep well, and drank. The well was very, very deep. Its inner sides were covered, as far as you could see, with long delicate weeds like pale green hair, but this faded away in the darkness. At the bottom was a bright space, reflecting the sky, but looking like some subterranean country. Alberic, as he bent over, was startled by suddenly seeing what seemed a face filling up part of that shining circle; but he remembered it must be his own reflection, and felt ashamed. So, to give himself courage, he bent over again, and sang his own name to the image. But instead of his own boyish voice he was answered by wonderful tones, high and deep alternately, running through the notes of a long, long cadence, as he had heard them on holidays at the Ducal Chapel at Luna.

When he had slaked his thirst, Alberic was about to unchain the bucket, when there was a rustle hard by, and a sort of little hiss, and there rose from the carved trough, from among the weeds and roses, and glided on to the brick of the well, a long, green, glittering thing. Alberic recognised it to be a snake; only, he had no idea it had such a flat, strange little head and such a long forked tongue, for the lady on the tapestry was a woman from the waist upwards. It sat on the opposite side of the well, moving

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moving its long neck in his direction, and fixing him with its small golden eyes. Then, slowly, it began to glide round the well circle towards him. Perhaps it wants to drink, thought Alberic, and tipped the bronze pitcher in its direction. But the creature glided past, and came around and rubbed itself against Alberic's hand. The boy was not afraid, for he knew nothing about snakes; but he started, for, on this hot day, the creature was icy cold. But then he felt sorry. "It must be dreadful to be always so cold," he said, "come, try and get warm in my pocket."

But the snake merely rubbed itself against his coat, and then disappeared back into the carved sarcophagus.

IV

Duke Balthasar Maria, as we have seen, was famous for his unfading youth, and much of his happiness and pride was due to this delightful peculiarity. Any comparison, therefore, which might diminish it was distasteful to the ever young sovereign of Luna; and when his son had died with mysterious suddenness, Duke Balthasar Maria's grief had been tempered by the consolatory fact that he was now the youngest man at his own court. This very natural feeling explains why the Duke of Luna had put behind him for several years the fact of having a grandson, painful because implying that he was of an age to be a grandfather. He had done his best, and succeeded not badly, to forget Alberic while the latter abode under his own roof; and now that the boy had been sent away to a distance, he forgot him entirely for the space of several years.

But Balthasar Maria's three chief counsellors had no such reason for forgetfulness; and so in turn, each unknown to the other,

other, the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester, sent spies to the Castle of Sparkling Waters, and even secretly visited that place in person. For by the coincidence of genius, the mind of each of these profound politicians, had been illuminated by the same remarkable thought, to wit : that Duke Balthasar Maria, unnatural as it seemed, would some day have to die, and Prince Alberic, if still alive, become duke in his stead. Those were the times of subtle statecraft ; and the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester were notable statemen even in their day. So each of them had provided himself with a scheme, which, in order to be thoroughly artistic, was twofold, and so to speak, double-barrelled. Alberic might live or he might die, and therefore Alberic must be turned to profit in either case. If, to invert the chances, Alberic should die before coming to the throne, the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester had each privately determined to represent this death as purposely brought about by himself for the benefit of one of three Powers which would claim the Duchy in case of extinction of the male line. The Jesuit had chosen to attribute the murder to devotion to the Holy See ; the Dwarf had preferred to appear active in favour of the King of Spain, and the Jester had decided that he would lay claim to the gratitude of the Emperor ; the very means which each would pretend to have used had been thought out : poison in each case ; only while the Dwarf had selected arsenic, taken through a pair of perfumed gloves, and the Jester pounded diamonds mixed in champagne, the Jesuit had modestly adhered to the humble cup of chocolate, which whether real or fictitious, had always stood his order in such good stead. Thus had each of these wily courtiers disposed of Alberic in case that he should die.

There remained the alternative of Alberic continuing to live ; and for this the three rival statemen were also prepared. If
Alberic

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Alberic lived, it was obvious that he must be made to select one of the three as his sole minister ; and banish, imprison, or put to death the other two. For this purpose it was necessary to secure his affection by gifts, until he should be old enough to understand that he had actually owed his life to the passionate loyalty of the Jesuit, or the Dwarf, or the Jester, each of whom had saved him from the atrocious enterprises of the other two counsellors of Balthasar Maria,—nay, who knows ? perhaps from the malignity of Balthasar Maria himself.

In accordance with these subtle machinations, each of the three statesmen determined to outwit his rivals by sending young Alberic such things as would appeal most strongly to a poor young prince living in banishment among peasants, and wholly unsupplied with pocket-money. The Jesuit expended a considerable sum on books, magnificently bound with the arms of Luna ; the Dwarf prepared several suits of tasteful clothes ; and the Jester selected, with infinite care, a horse of equal and perfect gentleness and mettle. And, unknown to one another, but much about the same period, each of the statesmen sent his present most secretly to Alberic. Imagine the astonishment and wrath of the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester, when each saw his messenger come back from Sparkling Waters, with his gift returned, and the news that Prince Alberic was already supplied with a complete library, a handsome wardrobe and not one, but two horses of the finest breed and training ; nay, more unexpected still, that while returning the gifts to their respective donors, he had rewarded the messengers with splendid liberality.

The result of this amazing discovery was much the same in the mind of the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester. Each instantly suspected one or both of his rivals ; then, on second thoughts, determined to change the present to one of the other items (horse,
clothes,

clothes, or books, as the case might be) little suspecting that each of them had been supplied already ; and, on further reflection, began to doubt the reality of the whole business, to suspect connivance of the messengers, intended insult on the part of the prince, and decided to trust only to the evidence of his own eyes in the matter.

Accordingly, within the same few months, the Jesuit, the Dwarf, and the Jester, feigned grievous illness to their Ducal Master, and while everybody thought them safe in bed in the Red Palace at Luna, hurried, on horseback, or in a litter, or in a coach, to the Castle of Sparkling Waters.

The scene with the peasant and his family, young Alberic's host, was identical on the three occasions ; and, as the farmer saw that these personages were equally willing to pay liberally for absolute secrecy, he very consistently swore to supply that desideratum to each of the three great functionaries. And similarly, in all three cases, it was deemed preferable to see the young prince first from a hiding place, before asking leave to pay their respects.

The Dwarf, who was the first in the field, was able to hide very conveniently in one of the cut velvet plumes which surmounted Alberic's four-post bedstead, and to observe the young prince as he changed his apparel. But he scarcely recognised the Duke's grandson. Alberic was sixteen, but far taller and stronger than his age would warrant. His figure was at once manly and delicate, and full of grace and vigour of movement. His long hair, the colour of floss silk, fell in wavy curls, which seemed to imply almost a woman's care and coquetry. His hands also, though powerful, were, as the Dwarf took note, of princely form and whiteness. As to his garments, the open doors of his wardrobe displayed every variety that a young prince could need ; and,
while

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while the Dwarf was watching, he was exchanging a russet and purple hunting dress, cut after the Hungarian fashion with cape and hood, and accompanied by a cap crowned with peacock's feathers, for a habit of white and silver, trimmed with Venetian lace, in which he intended to honour the wedding of one of the farmer's daughters. Never, in his most genuine youth, had Balthasar Maria, the ever young and handsome, been one quarter as beautiful in person or as delicate in apparel as his grandson in exile among poor country folk.

The Jesuit, in his turn, came to verify his messenger's extraordinary statements. Through the gap between two rafters he was enabled to look down on to Prince Alberic in his study. Magnificently bound books lined the walls of the closet, and in this gap hung valuable maps and prints. On the table were heaped several open volumes, among globes both terrestrial and celestial, and Alberic himself was leaning on the arm of a great chair, reciting the verses of Virgil in a most graceful chant. Never had the Jesuit seen a better-appointed study nor a more precocious young scholar.

As regards the Jester, he came at the very moment that Alberic was returning from a ride ; and, having begun life as an acrobat, he was able to climb into a large ilex which commanded an excellent view of the Castle yard. Alberic was mounted on a splendid jet-black barb, magnificently caparisoned in crimson and gold Spanish trappings. His groom—for he even had a groom—was riding a horse only a shade less perfect : it was white and he was black—a splendid negro such as great princes only own. When Alberic came in sight of the farmer's wife, who stood shelling peas on the doorstep, he waved his hat with infinite grace, caused his horse to caracole and rear three times in salutation, picked an apple up while cantering round the Castle yard, threw it in the air with
his

his sword and cut it in two as it descended, and did a number of similar feats such as are taught only to the most brilliant cavaliers. Now, as he was going to dismount, a branch of the ilex cracked, the black barb reared, and Alberic, looking up, perceived the Jester moving in the tree.

"A wonderful parti-coloured bird!" he exclaimed, and seized the fowling-piece that hung by his saddle. But before he had time to fire the Jester had thrown himself down and alighted, making three somersaults, on the ground.

"My Lord," said the Jester, "you see before you a faithful subject who, braving the threats and traps of your enemies, and, I am bound to add, risking also your Highness's sovereign displeasure, has been determined to see his Prince once more, to have the supreme happiness of seeing him at last clad and equipped and mounted"

"Enough!" interrupted Alberic sternly. "Say no more. You would have me believe that it is to you I owe my horses and books and clothes, even as the Dwarf and the Jesuit tried to make me believe about themselves last month. Know, then, that Alberic of Luna requires gifts from none of you. And now, most miserable councillor of my unhappy grandfather, begone!"

The Jester checked his rage, and tried, all the way back to Luna, to get at some solution of this intolerable riddle. The Jesuit and the Dwarf—the scoundrels—had been trying *their* hand then! Perhaps, indeed, it was their blundering which had ruined his own perfectly concocted scheme. But for their having come and claimed gratitude for gifts they had not made, Alberic would perhaps have believed that the Jester had not merely offered the horse which was refused, but had actually given the two which had been accepted, and the books and clothes (since there had been
books

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books and clothes given) into the bargain. But then, had not Alberic spoken as if he were perfectly sure from what quarter all his possessions had come? This reminded the Jester of the allusion to the Duke Balthasar Maria; Alberic had spoken of him as unhappy. Was it, could it be, possible that the treacherous old wretch had been keeping up relations with his grandson in secret, afraid—for he was a miserable coward at bottom—both of the wrath of his three counsellors, and of the hatred of his grandson? Was it possible, thought the Jester, that not only the Jesuit and the Dwarf, but the Duke of Luna also, had been intriguing against him round young Prince Alberic? Balthasar Maria was quite capable of it; he might be enjoying the trick he was playing to his three masters—for they were his masters; he might be preparing to turn suddenly upon them with his long neglected grandson like a sword to smite them. On the other hand, might this not be a mere mistake and supposition on the part of Prince Alberic, who, in his silly dignity, preferred to believe in the liberality of his ducal grandfather than in that of his grandfather's servants? Might the horses, and all the rest, not really be the gift of either the Dwarf or the Jesuit, although neither had got the credit for it? "No, no," exclaimed the Jester, for he hated his fellow servants worse than his master, "anything better than that! Rather a thousand times that it were the Duke himself who had outwitted them."

Then, in his bitterness, having gone over the old arguments again and again, some additional circumstances returned to his memory. The black groom was deaf and dumb, and the peasants it appeared, had been quite unable to extract any information from him. But he had arrived with those particular horses only a few months ago; a gift, the peasants had thought, from the old Duke of Luna. But Alberic, they had said, had possessed other horses before,

before, which they had also thus taken for granted, must have come from the Red Palace. And the clothes and books had been accumulating, it appeared, ever since the Prince's arrival in his place of banishment. Since this was the case, the plot, whether on the part of the Jesuit or the Dwarf, or on that of the Duke himself, had been going on for years before the Jester had bestirred himself! Moreover, the Prince not only possessed horses, but he had learned to ride; he not only had books, but he had learned to read, and even to read various tongues; and finally, the Prince was not only clad in princely garments, but he was every inch of him a Prince. He had then been consorting with other people than the peasants at Sparkling Waters. He must have been away—or—someone must have come. He had not been living in solitude.

But when—how—and above all, who?

And again the baffled Jester revolved the probabilities concerning the Dwarf, the Jesuit, and the Duke. It must be—it could be no other—it evidently could only be. . . .

“Ah!” exclaimed the unhappy diplomatist; “if only one could believe in magic!”

And it suddenly struck him, with terror and mingled relief, “Was it magic?”

But the Jester, like the Dwarf and the Jesuit, and the Duke of Luna himself, was altogether superior to such foolish beliefs.

V

The young Prince of Luna had never attempted to learn the story of Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady. Children sometimes conceive an inexplicable shyness, almost a dread, of knowing more on subjects which are uppermost in their thoughts; and
such

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such had been the case of Duke Balthasar Maria's grandson. Ever since the memorable morning when the ebony crucifix had been removed from in front of the faded tapestry, and the whole figure of the Snake Lady had been for the first time revealed, scarcely a day had passed without there coming to the boy's mind his nurse's words about his ancestor Alberic and the Snake Lady Oriana. But, even as he had asked no questions then, so he had asked no questions since ; shrinking more and more from all further knowledge of the matter. He had never questioned his nurse, he had never questioned the peasants of Sparkling Waters, although the story, he felt quite sure, must be well known among the ruins of Alberic the Blond's own castle. Nay, stranger still, he had never mentioned the subject to his dear Godmother, to whom he had learned to open his heart about all things, and who had taught him all that he knew.

For the Duke's Jester had guessed rightly that, during these years at Sparkling Waters, the young Prince had not consorted solely with peasants. The very evening after his arrival, as he was sitting by the marble well in the vineyard, looking towards the sea, he had felt a hand placed lightly on his shoulder, and looked up into the face of a beautiful lady veiled in green.

"Do not be afraid," she had said, smiling at his terror. "I am not a ghost, but alive like you ; and I am, though you do not know it, your Godmother. My dwelling is close to this castle, and I shall come every evening to play and talk with you, here by the little white palace with the pillars, where the fodder is stacked. Only, you must remember that I do so against the wishes of your grandfather and all his friends, and that if ever you mention me to anyone, or allude in any way to our meetings, I shall be obliged to leave the neighbourhood, and you will never see me again. Some day when you are big you will learn why ;
till

till then you must take me on trust. And now what shall we play at?"

And thus his Godmother had come every evening at sunset ; just for an hour and no more, and had taught the poor solitary little prince to play (for he had never played) and to read, and to manage a horse, and, above all, to love : for, except the old tapestry in the Red Palace, he had never loved anything in the world.

Alberic told his dear Godmother everything, beginning with the story of the two pieces of tapestry, the one they had taken away and the one he had cut to pieces ; and he asked her about all the things he ever wanted to know, and she was always able to answer. Only, about two things they were silent : she never told him her name nor where she lived, nor whether Duke Balthasar Maria knew her (the boy guessed that she had been a friend of his father's) ; and Alberic never revealed the fact that the tapestry had represented his ancestor and the beautiful Oriana ; for, even to his dear Godmother, and most perhaps to her, he found it impossible even to mention Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady.

But the story, or rather the name of the story he did not know, never loosened its hold on Alberic's mind. Little by little, as he grew up, it came to add to his life two friends, of whom he never told his Godmother. They were, to be sure, of such sort, however different, that a boy might find it difficult to speak about without feeling foolish. The first of the two friends was his own ancestor, Alberic the Blond ; and the second that large tame grass snake whose acquaintance he had made the day after his arrival at the castle. About Alberic the Blond he knew indeed but little, save that he had reigned in Luna many hundreds of years ago, and that he had been a very brave and glorious prince indeed, who had helped.

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helped to conquer the Holy Sepulchre with Godfrey and Tancred and the other heroes of Tasso. But, perhaps in proportion to this vagueness, Alberic the Blond served to personify all the notions of chivalry which the boy had learned from his Godmother, and those which bubbled up in his own breast. Nay, little by little the young Prince began to take his unknown ancestor as a model, and in a confused way, to identify himself with him. For was he not fair-haired too, and Prince of Luna, *Alberic*, third of the name, as the other had been first? Perhaps for this reason he could never speak of this ancestor with his Godmother. She might think it presumptuous and foolish; besides, she might perhaps tell him things about Alberic the Blond which might hurt him; the poor young Prince, who had compared the splendid reputation of his own grandfather with the miserable reality, had grown up precociously sceptical. As to the Snake, with whom he played everyday in the grass, and who was his only companion during the many hours of his Godmother's absence, he would willingly have spoken of her, and had once been on the point of doing so, but he had noticed that the mere name of such creatures seemed to be odious to his Godmother. Whenever, in their readings, they came across any mention of serpents, his Godmother would exclaim, "Let us skip that," with a look of intense pain in her usually cheerful countenance. It was a pity, Alberic thought, that so lovely and dear a lady should feel such hatred towards any living creature, particularly towards a kind, which like his own tame grass snake, was perfectly harmless. But he loved her too much to dream of thwarting her; and he was very grateful to his tame snake for having the tact never to show herself at the hour of his Godmother's visits.

But to return to the story represented on the dear, faded tapestry in the Red Palace.

When

When Prince Alberic, unconscious to himself, was beginning to turn into a full-grown and gallant-looking youth, a change began to take place in him, and it was about the story of his ancestor and the Lady Oriana. He thought of it more than ever, and it began to haunt his dreams; only it was now a vaguely painful thought, and, while dreading still to know more, he began to experience a restless, miserable, craving to know all. His curiosity was like a thorn in his flesh, working its way in and in; and it seemed something almost more than curiosity. And yet, he was still shy and frightened of the subject; nay, the greater his craving to know, the greater grew a strange certainty that the knowing would be accompanied by evil. So, although many people could have answered—the very peasants, the fishermen of the coast, and first, and foremost, his Godmother—he let months pass before he asked the question.

It, and the answer, came of a sudden.

There occasionally came to Sparkling Waters an old man, who united in his tattered person the trades of mending crockery and reciting fairy tales. He would seat himself, in summer, under the spreading fig tree in the castle yard, and in winter, by the peasants' deep, black chimney, alternately boring holes in pipkins, or gluing plate edges, and singing, in a cracked, nasal voice, but not without dignity and charm of manner, the stories of the King of Portugal's Cowherd, of the Feathers of the Griffin, or some of the many stanzas of *Orlando* or *Jerusalem Delivered*, which he knew by heart. Our young Prince had always avoided him, partly from a vague fear of a mention of his ancestor and the Snake Lady, and partly because of something vaguely sinister in the old man's eye. But now he awaited with impatience the vagrant's periodical return, and on one occasion, summoned him to his own chamber.

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“Sing

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"Sing me," he commanded, "the story of Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady."

The old man hesitated, and answered with a strange look :—

"My lord, I do not know it."

A sudden feeling, such as the youth had never experienced before, seized hold of Alberic. He did not recognise himself. He saw and heard himself, as if it were some one else, not first at some pieces of gold, of those his godmother had given him, and then at his fowling piece hung on the wall ; and as he did so, he had a strange thought : "I must be mad." But he merely said, sternly :—

"Old man, that is not true. Sing that story at once, if you value my money and your safety."

The vagrant took his white-bearded chin in his hand, mused, and then, fumbling among the files and drills and pieces of wire in his tool basket, which made a faint metallic accompaniment, he slowly began to chant the following stanzas :—

VI

Now listen, courteous Prince, to what befel your ancestor, the valorous Alberic, returning from the Holy Land.

Already a year had passed since the strongholds of Jerusalem had fallen beneath the blows of the faithful, and since the sepulchre of Christ had been delivered from the worshippers of Macomet. The great Godfrey was enthroned as its guardian, and the mighty barons, his companions, were wending their way homewards : Tancred, and Bohemund, and Reynold, and the rest.

The valorous Alberic, the honour of Luna, after many perilous adventures, brought by the anger of the Wizard Macomet,
was

was shipwrecked on his homeward way, and cast, alone of all his great following, upon the rocky shore of an unknown island. He wandered long about, among woods and pleasant pastures, but without ever seeing any signs of habitation; nourishing himself solely on the berries and clear water, and taking his rest in the green grass beneath the trees. At length, after some days of wandering, he came to a dense forest, the like of which he had never seen before, so deep was its shade and so tangled were its boughs. He broke the branches with his iron-gloved hand, and the air became filled with the croaking and screeching of dreadful night-birds. He pushed his way with shoulder and knee, trampling the broken leafage under foot, and the air was filled with the roaring of monstrous lions and tigers. He grasped his sharp double-edged sword and hewed through the interlaced branches, and the air was filled with the shrieks and sobs of a vanquished city. But the Knight of Luna went on, undaunted, cutting his way through the enchanted wood. And behold! as he issued thence, there rose before him a lordly castle, as of some great prince, situate in a pleasant meadow among running streams. And as Alberic approached the portcullis was raised, and the drawbridge lowered; and there arose sounds of fifes and bugles, but nowhere could he descry any living creature around. And Alberic entered the castle, and found therein guardrooms full of shining arms, and chambers spread with rich stuffs, and a banquetting hall, with a great table laid and a chair of state at the end. And as he entered a concert of invisible voices and instruments greeted him sweetly, and called him by name, and bid him be welcome; but not a living soul did he see. So he sat him down at the table, and as he did so, invisible hands filled his cup and his plate, and ministered to him with delicacies of all sorts. Now, when the good knight had eaten and drunken his fill, he drank to
the

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the health of his unknown host, declaring himself the servant thereof with his sword and heart. After which, weary with wandering, he prepared to take rest on the carpets which strewed the ground ; but invisible hands unbuckled his armour, and clad him in silken robes, and led him to a couch all covered with rose-leaves. And when he had laid himself down, the concert of invisible singers and players put him to sleep with their melodies.

It was the hour of sunset when the valorous Baron awoke, and buckled on his armour, and hung on his thigh his great sword Brillamorte ; and the invisible hands helped him once more.

And the Knight of Luna went all over the enchanted castle, and found all manner of rarities, treasures of precious stones, such as great kings possess, and store of gold and silver vessels, and rich stuffs, and stables full of fiery coursers ready caparisoned ; but never a human creature anywhere. And, wondering more and more, he went forth into the orchard, which lay within the walls of the castle. And such another orchard, sure, was never seen, since that in which the hero Hercules found the three golden apples and slew the great dragon. For you might see in this place fruit trees of all kinds, apples and pears, and peaches and plums, and the goodly orange, which bore at the same time fruit and delicate and scented blossom. And all around were set hedges of roses, whose scent was even like heaven ; and there were other flowers of all kinds, those into which the vain Narcissus turned through love of himself, and those which grew, they tell us, from the blood-drops of fair Venus's minion ; and lilies of which that Messenger carried a sheaf who saluted the Meek Damsel, glorious above all womankind. And in the trees sang innumerable birds ; and others, of unknown breed, joined melody in hanging cages and aviaries. And in the orchard's midst was set a fountain, the most wonderful ever made, its waters running
in

in green channels among the flowered grass. For that fountain was made in the likeness of twin naked maidens, dancing together, and pouring water out of pitchers as they did so ; and the maidens were of fine silver, and the pitchers of wrought gold, and the whole so cunningly contrived by magic art that the maidens really moved and danced with the waters they were pouring out : a wonderful work, most truly. And when the Knight of Luna had feasted his eyes upon this marvel, he saw among the grass, beneath a flowering almond tree, a sepulchre of marble, cunningly carved and gilded, on which was written, "Here is imprisoned the Fairy Oriana, most miserable of all fairies, condemned for no fault, but by envious powers, to a dreadful fate,"—and as he read, the inscription changed, and the sepulchre showed these words : "O Knight of Luna, valorous Alberic, if thou wouldst show thy gratitude to the hapless mistress of this castle, summon up thy redoubtable courage, and, whatsoever creature issue from my marble heart, swear thou to kiss it three times on the mouth, that Oriana may be released."

And Alberic drew his great sword, and on its hilt, shaped like a cross, he swore.

Then wouldst thou have heard a terrible sound of thunder, and seen the castle walls rock. But Alberic, nothing daunted, repeats in a loud voice, "I swear," and instantly that sepulchre's lid upheaves, and there issues thence and rises up a great green snake, wearing a golden crown, and raises itself and fawns towards the valorous Knight of Luna. And Alberic starts and recoils in terror. For rather, a thousand times, confront alone the armed hosts of all the heathen, than put his lips to that cold, creeping beast ! And the serpent looks at Alberic with great gold eyes, and big tears issue thence, and it drops prostrate on the grass, and Alberic summons courage and approaches ; but when the serpent
glides

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glides along his arm, a horror takes him, and he falls back unable. And the tears stream from the snake's golden eyes, and moans come from its mouth.

And Alberic runs forward, and seizes the serpent in both hands, and lifts it up, and three times presses his hot lips against its cold and slippery skin, shutting his eyes in horror, and when the Knight of Luna opens them again, behold! O wonder! in his arms no longer a dreadful snake, but a damsel, richly dressed and beautiful beyond comparison.

VII

Young Alberic sickened that very night, and lay for many days with raging fever. The peasant's wife and a good neighbouring priest nursed him unhelped, for when the messenger they sent arrived at Luna, Duke Balthasar was busy rehearsing a grand ballet in which he himself danced the part of Phœbus Apollo; and the ducal physician was therefore despatched to Sparkling Waters only when the young prince was already recovering.

Prince Alberic undoubtedly passed through a very bad illness, and went fairly out of his mind for fever and ague.

He raved so dreadfully in his delirium about enchanted tapestries and terrible grottoes, Twelve Cæsars with rolling eyeballs, barbers' blocks with perukes on them, monkeys of verde antique, and porphyry rhinoceroses, and all manner of hellish creatures, that the good priest began to suspect a case of demoniac possession, and caused candles to be kept lighted all day and all night, and holy water to be sprinkled, and a printed form of exorcism, absolutely sovereign in such trouble, to be nailed against the bed-post. On the fourth day the young prince fell into

into a profound sleep, from which he awaked in apparent possession of his faculties.

"Then you are not the porphyry rhinoceros?" he said, very slowly as his eye fell upon the priest; "and this is my own dear little room at Sparkling Waters, though I do not understand all those candles. I thought it was the great hall in the Red Palace, and that all those animals of precious marbles, and my grandfather, the duke, in his bronze and gold robes, were beating me and my tame snake to death with Harlequin's laths. It was terrible. But now I see it was all fancy and delirium."

The poor youth gave a sigh of relief, and feebly caressed the rugged old hand of the priest, which lay on his counterpane. The prince lay for a long while motionless, but gradually a strange light came into his eyes, and a smile on to his lips. Presently he made a sign that the peasants should leave the room, and taking once more the good priest's hand, he looked solemnly in his eyes, and spoke in an earnest voice. "My father," he said, "I have seen and heard strange things in my sickness, and I cannot tell for certain now what belongs to the reality of my previous life, and what is merely the remembrance of delirium. On this I would fain be enlightened. Promise me, my father, to answer my questions truly, for this is a matter of the welfare of my soul, and therefore of your own."

The priest nearly jumped on his chair. So he had been right. The demons had been trying to tamper with the poor young prince, and now he was going to have a fine account of it all.

"My son," he murmured, "as I hope for the spiritual welfare of both of us, I promise to answer all your interrogations to the best of my powers. Speak them without hesitation."

Alberic hesitated for a moment, and his eyes glanced from one long lit taper to the other.

"In

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"In that case," he said, slowly, "let me conjure you, my father, to tell me whether or not there exists a certain tradition in my family, of the loves of my ancestor, Alberic the Blond, with a certain Snake Lady, and how he was unfaithful to her, and failed to disenchant her, and how a second Alberic, also my ancestor, loved this same Snake Lady, but failed before the ten years of fidelity were over, and became a monk. . . . Does such a story exist, or have I imagined it all during my sickness?"

"My son," replied the good priest, testily, for he was most horribly disappointed by this speech, "it is scarce fitting that a young prince but just escaped from the jaws of death—and, perhaps, even from the insidious onslaught of the Evil One—should give his mind to idle tales like these."

"Call them what you choose," answered the prince, gravely, "but remember your promise, father. Answer me truly, and presume not to question my reasons."

The priest started. What a hasty ass he had been! Why these were probably the demons talking out of Alberic's mouth, causing him to ask silly irrelevant questions in order to prevent a good confession. Such were notoriously among their stock tricks! But he would outwit them. If only it were possible to summon up St. Paschal Baylon, that new fashionable saint who had been doing such wonders with devils lately! But St. Paschal Baylon required not only that you should say several rosaries, but that you should light four candles on a table and lay a supper for two; after that there was nothing he would not do. So the priest hastily seized two candlesticks from the foot of the bed, and called to the peasant's wife to bring a clean napkin and plates and glasses; and meanwhile endeavoured to detain the demons by answering the poor prince's foolish chatter, "Your ancestors, the two Alberics—a tradition in your Serene family—
yes,

yes, my Lord—there is such—let me see, how does the story go?—ah yes—this demon, I mean this Snake Lady was a—what they call a fairy—or witch, malefica or stryx is, I believe, the proper Latin expression—who had been turned into a snake for her sins—good woman, woman, is it possible you cannot be a little quicker in bringing those plates for his Highness's supper? The Snake Lady—let me see—was to cease altogether being a snake if a cavalier remained faithful to her for ten years; and at any rate turned into a woman every time a cavalier was found who had the courage to give her a kiss as if she were not a snake—a disagreeable thing, besides being mortal sin. As I said just now, this enabled her to resume temporarily her human shape, which is said to have been fair enough; but how can one tell? I believe she was allowed to change into a woman for an hour at sunset, in any case and without anybody kissing her, but only for an hour. A very unlikely story, my Lord, and not a very moral one to my thinking!”

And the good priest spread the table-cloth over the table, wondering secretly when the plates and glasses for St. Paschal Baylon would make their appearance. If only the demon could be prevented from beating a retreat before all was ready! “To return to the story about which your Highness is pleased to inquire,” he continued, trying to gain time by pretending to humour the demon who was asking questions through the poor Prince's mouth, “I can remember hearing a poem before I took orders—a foolish poem too, in a very poor style, if my memory is correct—that related the manner in which Alberic the Blond met this Snake Lady, and disenchanted her by performing the ceremony I have alluded to. The poem was frequently sung at fairs and similar resorts of the uneducated, and, as remarked, was a very inferior composition indeed. Alberic the Blond afterwards
came

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came to his senses, it appears, and after abandoning the Snake Lady fulfilled his duty as a prince, and married the princess. . . . I cannot exactly remember what princess, but it was a very suitable marriage, no doubt, from which your Highness is of course descended.

“As regards the Marquis Alberic, second of the name, of whom it is accounted that he died in the odour of sanctity, (and indeed it is said that the facts concerning his beatification are being studied in the proper quarters), there is a mention in a life of Saint Fredevaldus, bishop and patron of Luna, printed at the beginning of the present century at Venice, with approbation and license of the authorities and inquisition, a mention of the fact that this Marquis Alberic the second had contracted, having abandoned his lawful wife, a left-handed marriage with this same Snake Lady (such evil creatures not being subject to natural death), she having induced him thereunto in hope of his proving faithful ten years, and by this means restoring her altogether to human shape. But a certain holy hermit, having got wind of this scandal, prayed to St. Fredevaldus as patron of Luna, whereupon St. Fredevaldus, took pity on the Marquis Alberic’s sins, and appeared to him in a vision at the end of the ninth year of his irregular connection with the Snake Lady, and touched his heart so thoroughly that he instantly forswore her company, and handing the Marquisate over to his mother, abandoned the world and entered the order of St. Romuald, in which he died, as remarked, in odour of sanctity, in consequence of which the present Duke, your Highness’s magnificent grandfather, is at this moment, as befits so pious a prince, employing his influence with the Holy Father for the beatification of so glorious an ancestor. And now, my son,” added the good priest, suddenly changing his tone, for he had got the table ready, and lighted the candles, and
only

only required to go through the preliminary invocation of St. Paschal Baylon—"and now, my son, let your curiosity trouble you no more, but endeavour to obtain some rest, and if possible——"

But the prince interrupted him.

"One word more, good father," he begged, fixing him with earnest eyes, "is it known what has been the fate of the Snake Lady?"

The impudence of the demons made the priest quite angry, but he must not scare them before the arrival of St. Paschal, so he controlled himself, and answered slowly by gulps, between the lines of the invocation he was mumbling under his breath:

"My Lord—it results from the same life of St. Fredevaldus, that . . . (in case of property lost, fire, flood, earthquake, plague) . . . that the Snake Lady (thee we invoke, most holy Paschal Baylon!). The Snake Lady being of the nature of fairies, cannot die unless her head be severed from her trunk, and is still haunting the world, together with other evil spirits, in hopes that another member of the house of Luna (thee we invoke, most holy Paschal Baylon!)—may succumb to her arts and be faithful to her for the ten years needful to her disenchantments—(most holy Paschal Baylon!—and most of all—on thee we call—for aid against the . . .)——"

But before the priest could finish his invocation, a terrible shout came from the bed where the sick prince was lying:

"O Oriana, Oriana!" cried Prince Alberic, sitting up in his bed with a look which terrified the priest as much as his voice. "O Oriana, Oriana!" he repeated, and then fell back exhausted and broken.

"Bless my soul!" cried the priest, almost upsetting the table; "why the demon has already issued out of him! Who would have

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have guessed that St. Paschal Baylon performed his miracles as quick as that ! ”

VIII

Prince Alberic was awakened by the loud trill of a nightingale. The room was bathed in moonlight, in which the tapers, left burning round the bed to ward off evil spirits, flickered yellow and ineffectual. Through the open casement came, with the scent of freshly cut grass, a faint concert of nocturnal sounds : the silvery vibration of the cricket, the reedlike quavering notes of the leaf frogs, and, every now and then, the soft note of an owlet, seeming to stroke the silence as the downy wings growing out of the temples of the Sleep god might stroke the air. The nightingale had paused ; and Alberic listened breathless for its next burst of song. At last, and when he expected it least, it came, liquid, loud and triumphant ; so near that it filled the room and thrilled through his marrow like an unison of Cremona viols. He was singing in the pomegranate close outside, whose first buds must be opening into flame-coloured petals. For it was May. Alberic listened ; and collected his thoughts, and understood. He arose and dressed, and his limbs seemed suddenly strong, and his mind strangely clear, as if his sickness had been but a dream. Again the nightingale trilled out, and again stopped. Alberic crept noiselessly out of his chamber, down the stairs and into the open. Opposite, the moon had just risen, immense and golden, and the pines and the cypresses of the hill, the furthest battlements of the castle walls, were printed upon her like delicate lace. It was so light that the roses were pink, and the pomegranate flower scarlet, and the lemons pale yellow, and the grass bright green, only differently coloured from how they looked by day,

day, and as if washed over with silver. The orchard spread up-hill, its twigs and separate leaves all glittering as if made of diamonds, and its tree trunks and spalliers weaving strange black patterns of shadow. A little breeze shuddered up from the sea, bringing the scent of the irises grown for their root among the cornfields below. The nightingale was silent. But Prince Alberic did not stand waiting for its song. A spiral dance of fire-flies, rising and falling like a thin gold fountain, beckoned him upwards through the dewy grass. The circuit of castle walls, jagged and battlemented, and with tufts of trees profiled here and there against the resplendent blue pallor of the moonlight, seemed turned and knotted like huge snakes around the world.

Suddenly, again, the nightingale sang ; a throbbing, silver song. It was the same bird, Alberic felt sure ; but it was in front of him now, and was calling him onwards. The fire-flies wove their golden dance a few steps in front, always a few steps in front, and drew him up-hill through the orchard.

As the ground became steeper, the long trellises, black and crooked, seemed to twist and glide through the blue moonlight grass like black gliding snakes, and, at the top, its marble pillarets, clear in the moonlight, slumbered the little Gothic palace of white marble. From the solitary sentinel pine broke the song of the nightingale. This was the place. A breeze had risen, and from the shining moonlit sea, broken into causeways and flotillas of smooth and of fretted silver, came a faint briny smell, mingling with that of the irises and blossoming lemons, with the scent of vague ripeness and freshness. The moon hung like a silver lantern over the orchard ; the wood of the trellises patterned the blue luminous heaven, the vine leaves seemed to swim, transparent, in the shining air. Over the circular well, in the high grass, the
fire-flies

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fire-flies rose and fell like a thin fountain of gold. And, from the sentinel pine, the nightingale sang.

Prince Alberic leant against the brink of the well, by the trough carved with antique designs of serpent-bearing mænads. He was wonderfully calm, and his heart sang within him. It was, he knew, the hour and place of his fate.

The nightingale ceased: and the shrill songs of the crickets was suspended. The silvery luminous world was silent.

A quiver came through the grass by the well; a rustle through the roses. And, on the well's brink, encircling its central blackness, glided the Snake.

"Oriana!" whispered Alberic. "Oriana!" She paused, and stood almost erect. The Prince put out his hand, and she twisted round his arm, extending slowly her chilly coil to his wrist and fingers.

"Oriana!" whispered Prince Alberic again. And raising his hand to his face, he leaned down and pressed his lips on the little flat head of the serpent. And the nightingale sang. But a coldness seized his heart, the moon seemed suddenly extinguished, and he slipped away in unconsciousness.

When he awoke the moon was still high. The nightingale was singing its loudest. He lay in the grass by the well, and his head rested on the knees of the most beautiful of ladies. She was dressed in cloth of silver which seemed woven of moon mists, and shimmering moonlit green grass. It was his own dear God-mother.

IX

When Duke Balthasar Maria had got through the rehearsals of the ballet called *Daphne Transformed*, and finally danced his
part

part of Phoebus Apollo to the infinite delight and glory of his subjects, he was greatly concerned, being benignly humoured, on learning that he had very nearly lost his grandson and heir. The Dwarf, the Jesuit, and the Jester, whom he delighted in pitting against one another, had severely accused each other of disrespectful remarks about the dancing of that ballet; so Duke Balthasar determined to disgrace all three together and inflict upon them the hated presence of Prince Alberic. It was, after all, very pleasant to possess a young grandson, whom one could take to one's bosom and employ in being insolent to one's own favourites. It was time, said Duke Balthasar, that Alberic should learn the habits of a court and take unto himself a suitable princess.

The young prince accordingly was sent for from Sparkling Waters, and installed at Luna in a wing of the Red Palace, overlooking the Court of Honour, and commanding an excellent view of the great rockery, with the verde antique apes and the porphyry rhinoceros. He found awaiting him on the great staircase a magnificent staff of servants, a master of the horse, a grand cook, a barber, a hairdresser and assistant, a fencing master, and four fiddlers. Several lovely ladies of the Court, the principal ministers of the Crown and the Jesuit, the Dwarf and the Jester, were also ready to pay their respects. Prince Alberic threw himself out of the glass coach before they had time to open the door, and bowing coldly, ascended the staircase, carrying under his cloak what appeared to be a small wicker cage. The Jesuit, who was the soul of politeness, sprang forward and signed to an officer of the household to relieve his highness of this burden. But Alberic waved the man off; and the rumour went abroad that a hissing noise had issued from under the prince's cloak, and, like lightning, the head and forked tongue of a serpent.

Half-an-hour later the official spies had informed Duke Balthasar

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Balthasar that his grandson and heir had brought from Sparkling Waters no apparent luggage save two swords, a fowling piece, a volume of Virgil, a branch of pomegranate blossom, and a tame grass snake.

Duke Balthasar did not like the idea of the grass snake; but wishing to annoy the Jester, the Dwarf, and the Jesuit, he merely smiled when they told him of it, and said: "The dear boy! What a child he is! He probably, also, has a pet lamb, white as snow, and gentle as spring, mourning for him in his old home! How touching is the innocence of childhood! Heigho! I was just like that myself not so very long ago." Whereupon the three favourites and the whole Court of Luna smiled and bowed and sighed: "How lovely is the innocence of youth!" while the Duke fell to humming the well-known air, "Thrysis was a shepherd boy," of which the ducal fiddlers instantly struck up the ritornel.

"But," added Balthasar Maria, with that subtle blending of majesty and archness in which he excelled all living princes, "but it is now time that the prince, my grandson, should learn"—here he put his hand on his sword and threw back slightly one curl of his jet black peruke—"the stern exercises of Mars; and, also, let us hope, the freaks and frolics of Venus."

Saying which, the old sinner pinched the cheek of a lady of the very highest quality, whose husband and father were instantly congratulated by all the court on this honour.

Prince Alberic was displayed next day to the people of Luna, standing on the balcony among a tremendous banging of mortars; while Duke Balthasar explained that he felt towards this youth all the fondness and responsibility of an elder brother. There was a grand ball, a gala opera, a review, a very high mass in the cathedral; the Dwarf, the Jesuit, and the Jester each separately offered

offered his services to Alberic in case he wanted a loan of money, a love letter carried, or in case even (expressed in more delicate terms) he might wish to poison his grandfather. Duke Balthasar Maria, on his side, summoned his ministers, and sent couriers, booted and liveried, to three great dukes of Italy, carrying each of these in a morocco wallet emblazoned with the arms of Luna, an account of Prince Alberic's lineage and person, and a request for particulars of any marriageable princesses and dowries to be disposed of.

X

Prince Alberic did not give his grandfather that warm satisfaction which the old duke had expected. Balthasar Maria, entirely bent upon annoying the three favourites, had said, and had finally believed, that he intended to introduce his grandson to the delight and duties of life, and in the company of this beloved stripling to dream that he, too, was a youth once more: a statement which the court took with due deprecatory reverence, as the duke was well known never to have ceased to be young.

But Alberic did not lend himself to so touching an idyll. He behaved, indeed, with the greatest decorum, and manifested the utmost respect for his grandfather. He was marvellously assiduous in the council chamber, and still more so in following the military exercises and learning the trade of a soldier. He surprised every one by his interest and intelligence in all affairs of state; he more than surprised the Court by his readiness to seek knowledge about the administration of the country and the condition of the people. He was a youth of excellent morals, courage and diligence; but, there was no denying it, he had

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positively no conception of *sacrificing to the Graces*. He sat out, as if he had been watching a review, the delicious operas and superb ballets which absorbed half the revenue of the duchy. He listened, without a smile of comprehension, to the witty innuendoes of the ducal table. But worst of all, he had absolutely no eyes, let alone a heart, for the fair sex. Now Balthasar Maria had assembled at Luna a perfect bevy of lovely nymphs, both ladies of the greatest birth, whose husbands received most honourable posts military and civil, and young females of humbler extraction, though not less expressive habits, ranging from singers and dancers to slave-girls of various colours, all dressed in their appropriate costume: a galaxy of beauty which was duly represented by the skill of celebrated painters on all the walls of the Red Palace, where you may still see their fading charms, habited as Diana, or Pallas, or in the spangles of Columbine, or the turban of Sibyls. These ladies were the object of Duke Balthasar's most munificently divided attentions; and in the delight of his new-born family affection, he had promised himself much tender interest in guiding the taste of his heir among such of these nymphs as had already received his own exquisite appreciation. Great, therefore, was the disappointment of the affectionate grandfather when his dream of companionship was dispelled, and it became hopeless to interest young Alberic in anything at Luna, save despatches and cannons.

The Court, indeed, found the means of consoling Duke Balthasar for this bitterness, by extracting therefrom a brilliant comparison between the unfading grace, the vivacious, though majestic, character of the grandfather, and the gloomy and pedantic personality of the grandson. But, although Balthasar Maria would only smile at every new proof of Alberic's bearish obtuseness, and ejaculate in French, "Poor child! he was born old

old, and I shall die young !” the reigning Prince of Luna grew vaguely to resent the peculiarities of his heir.

In this fashion things proceeded in the Red Palace at Luna, until Prince Alberic had attained his twenty-first year.

He was sent, in the interval, to visit the principal Courts of Italy, and to inspect its chief curiosities, natural and historical, as befitted the heir to an illustrious state. He received the golden rose from the Pope in Rome ; he witnessed the festivities of Ascension Day from the Doge’s barge at Venice ; he accompanied the Marquis of Montferrat to the camp under Turin ; he witnessed the launching of a galley against the Barbary corsairs by the Knights of St. Stephen in the port of Leghorn, and a grand bull-fight and burning of heretics given by the Spanish Viceroy at Palermo ; and he was allowed to be present when the celebrated Dr. Borri turned two brass buckles into pure gold before the Archduke at Milan. On all of which occasions the heir-apparent of Luna bore himself with a dignity and discretion most singular in one so young. In the course of these journeys he was presented to several of the most promising heiresses in Italy, some of whom were of so tender age as to be displayed in jewelled swaddling-clothes on brocade cushions ; and a great many possible marriages were discussed behind his back. But Prince Alberic declared for his part that he had decided to lead a single life until the age of twenty-eight or thirty, and that he would then require the assistance of no ambassadors or chancellors, but find for himself the future Duchess of Luna.

All this did not please Balthasar Maria, as indeed nothing else about his grandson did please him much. But, as the old duke did not really relish the idea of a daughter-in-law at Luna, and as young Alberic’s whimsicalities entailed no expense, and left him entirely free in his business and pleasure, he turned a deaf ear to the

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the criticisms of his councillors, and letting his grandson inspect fortifications, drill soldiers, pore over parchments, and mope in his wing of the palace, with no amusement save his repulsive tame snake, Balthasar Maria composed and practised various ballets, and began to turn his attention very seriously to the completion of the rockery grotto and of the sepulchral chapel, which, besides the Red Palace itself, were the chief monuments of his glorious reign.

It was this growing desire to witness the fulfilment of these magnanimous projects which led the Duke of Luna into unexpected conflict with his grandson. The wonderful enterprises above mentioned involved immense expenses, and had periodically been suspended for lack of funds. The collection of animals in the rockery was very far from complete. A camelopard of spotted alabaster, an elephant of Sardinian jasper, and the entire families of a cow and sheep, all of correspondingly rich marbles, were urgently required to fill up the corners. Moreover, the supply of water was at present so small that the fountains were dry save for a couple of hours on the very greatest holidays; and it was necessary for the perfect naturalness of this ingenious work that an aqueduct twenty miles long should pour perennial streams from a high mountain lake into the grotto of the Red Palace.

The question of the sepulchral chapel was, if possible, even worse; for, after every new ballet, Duke Balthasar went through a fit of contrition, during which he fixed his thoughts on death; and the possibilities of untimely release, and of burial in an unfinished mausoleum, filled him with terrors. It is true that Duke Balthasar had, immediately after building the vast domed chapel, secured an effigy of his own person before taking thought for the monuments of his already buried ancestors; and the statue, twelve feet high, representing himself in coronation robes of green bronze brocaded

brocaded with gold, holding a sceptre and bearing on his head, of purest silver, a spiky coronet set with diamonds, was one of the curiosities which travellers admired most in Italy. But this statue was unsymmetrical, and moreover had a dismal suggestiveness, so long as surrounded by empty niches ; and the fact that only one half of the pavement was inlaid with discs of sardonyx, jasper and cornelian, and that the larger part of the walls were rough brick without a vestige of the mosaic pattern of lapis-lazuli, malachite, pearl, and coral, which had been begun round the one finished tomb, rendered the chapel as poverty-stricken in one aspect as it was magnificent in another. The finishing of the chapel was therefore urgent, and two more bronze statues were actually cast, those to wit of the duke's father and grandfather, and mosaic workmen called from the Medicean works in Florence. But, all of a sudden the ducal treasury was discovered to be empty, and the ducal credit to be exploded.

State lotteries, taxes on salt, even a sham crusade against the Dey of Algiers, all failed to produce any money. The alliance, the right to pass troops through the duchy, the letting out of the ducal army to the highest bidder, had long since ceased to be a source of revenue either from the Emperor, the King of Spain, or the Most Christian One. The Serene Republics of Venice and Genoa publicly warned their subjects against lending a single sequin to the Duke of Luna ; the Dukes of Parma and Modena began to worry about bad debts ; the Pope himself had the atrocious bad taste to make complaints about suppression of church dues and interception of Peter's pence. There remained to the bankrupt Duke Balthasar Maria only one hope in the world—the marriage of his grandson.

There happened to exist at that moment a sovereign of incalculable wealth, with an only daughter of marriageable age. But this

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this potentate, although the nephew of a recent Pope, by whose confiscations his fortunes were founded, had originally been a dealer in such goods as are comprehensively known as drysaltery ; and, rapacious as were the princes of the Empire, each was too much ashamed of his neighbours to venture upon alliance with a family of so obtrusive an origin. Here was Balthasar Maria's opportunity ; the drysalter prince's ducats should complete the rockery, the aqueduct and the chapel ; the drysalter's daughter should be wedded to Alberic of Luna, that was to be third of the name.

XI

Prince Alberic sternly declined. He expressed his dutiful wish that the grotto and the chapel, like all other enterprises undertaken by his grandparent, might be brought to an end worthy of him. He declared that the aversion to drysalters was a prejudice unshared by himself. He even went so far as to suggest that the eligible princess should marry not the heir-apparent, but the reigning Duke of Luna. But, as regarded himself, he intended, as stated, to remain for many years single. Duke Balthasar had never in his life before seen a man who was determined to oppose him. He felt terrified and became speechless in the presence of young Alberic.

Direct influence having proved useless, the duke and his councillors, among whom the Jesuit, the Dwarf and the Jester had been duly re-instated, looked round for means of indirect persuasion or coercion. A celebrated Venetian beauty was sent for to Luna—a lady frequently employed in diplomatic missions, which she carried through by her unparalleled grace in dancing. But Prince Alberic, having watched her for half an hour, merely
remarked

remarked to his equerry that his own tame grass snake made the same movements as the lady, infinitely better and more modestly. Whereupon this means was abandoned. The Dwarf then suggested a new method of acting on the young Prince's feelings. This, which he remembered to have been employed very successfully in the case of a certain Duchess of Malfi, who had given her family much trouble some generations back, consisted in dressing up a certain number of lacqueys as ghosts and devils, hiring some genuine lunatics from a neighbouring establishment, and introducing them at dead of night into Prince Alberic's chamber. But the Prince, who was busy at his orisons, merely threw a heavy stool and two candlesticks at the apparitions; and, as he did so, the tame snake suddenly rose up from the floor, growing colossal in the act, and hissed so terrifically that the whole party fled down the corridor. The most likely advice was given by the Jesuit. This truly subtle diplomatist averred that it was useless trying to act upon the Prince by means which did not already affect him; instead of clumsily constructing a lever for which there was no fulcrum in the youth's soul, it was necessary to find out whatever leverage there might already exist.

Now, on careful inquiry, there was discovered a fact which the official spies, who always acted by precedent and pursued their inquiries according to the rules of the human heart as taught by the Secret Inquisition of the Republic of Venice, had naturally failed to perceive. This fact consisted in a rumour, very vague but very persistent, that Prince Alberic did not inhabit his wing of the palace in absolute solitude. Some of the pages attending on his person affirmed to have heard whispered conversations in the Prince's study, on entering which they had invariably found him alone; others maintained that, during the absence of the Prince from the palace, they had heard the sound of his private harpsichord,

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harpichord, the one with the story of Orpheus and the view of Soracte on the cover, although he always kept its key on his person. A footman declared that he had found in the Prince's study, and among his books and maps, a piece of embroidery certainly not belonging to the Prince's furniture and apparel, moreover, half finished, and with a needle sticking in the canvas ; which piece of embroidery the Prince had thrust into his pocket. But, as none of the attendants had ever seen any visitor entering or issuing from the Prince's apartments, and the professional spies had ransacked all possible hiding-places and modes of exit in vain, these curious indications had been neglected, and the opinion had been formed that Alberic, being, as every one could judge, somewhat insane, had a gift of ventriloquism, a taste for musical-boxes, and a proficiency in unmanly handicrafts which he carefully dissimulated.

These rumours had at one time caused great delight to Duke Balthasar ; but he had got tired of sitting in a dark cupboard in his grandson's chamber, and had caught a bad chill looking through his keyhole ; so he had stopped all further inquiries as officious fooling on the part of impudent lacqueys.

But the Jesuit foolishly adhered to the rumour. "Discover her," he said, "and work through her on Prince Alberic." But Duke Balthasar, after listening twenty times to this remark with the most delighted interest, turned round on the twenty-first time and gave the Jesuit a look of Jove-like thunder ; "My father," he said, "I am surprised—I may say more than surprised—at a person of your cloth descending so low as to make aspersions upon the virtue of a young Prince reared in my palace and born of my blood. Never let me hear another word about ladies of light manners being secreted within these walls." Whereupon the Jesuit retired, and was in disgrace for a fortnight, till Duke Balthasar

Balthasar woke up one morning with a strong apprehension of dying.

But no more was said of the mysterious female friend of Prince Alberic, still less was any attempt made to gain her intervention in the matter of the dysalter Princess's marriage.

XII

More desperate measures were soon resorted to. It was given out that Prince Alberic was engrossed in study, and he was forbidden to leave his wing of the Red Palace, with no other view than the famous grotto with the verde antique apes and the porphyry rhinoceros. It was published that Prince Alberic was sick, and he was confined very rigorously to a less agreeable apartment in the rear of the palace, where he could catch sight of the plaster laurels and draperies, and the rolling plaster eyeball of one of the Twelve Cæsars under the cornice. It was judiciously hinted that the Prince had entered into religious retreat, and he was locked and bolted into the State prison, alongside of the unfinished sepulchral chapel, whence a lugubrious hammering came as the only sound of life. In each of these places the recalcitrant youth was duly argued with by some of his grandfather's familiars, and even received a visit from the old duke in person. But threats and blandishments were all in vain, and Alberic persisted in his refusal to marry.

It was six months now since he had seen the outer world, and six weeks since he had inhabited the State prison, every stage in his confinement, almost every day thereof, having systematically deprived him of some luxury, some comfort, or some mode of passing his time. His harpsichord and foils had remained in the
gala

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gala wing overlooking the grotto. His maps and books had not followed him beyond the higher story with the view of the Twelfth Cæsar. And now they had taken away from him his Virgil, his inkstand and paper, and left him only a book of Hours.

Balthasar Maria and his councillors felt intolerably baffled. There remained nothing further to do ; for if Prince Alberic were publicly beheaded, or privately poisoned, or merely left to die of want and sadness, it was obvious that Prince Alberic could no longer conclude the marriage with the drysalter Princess, and that no money to finish the grotto and the chapel, or to carry on Court expenses, would be forthcoming.

It was a burning day of August, a Friday, thirteenth of that month, and after a long prevalence of enervating sirocco, when the old duke determined to make one last appeal to the obedience of his grandson. The sun, setting among ominous clouds, sent a lurid orange beam into Prince Alberic's prison chamber, at the moment that his ducal grandfather, accompanied by the Jester, the Dwarf and the Jesuit, appeared on its threshold after prodigious clanking of keys and clattering of bolts. The unhappy youth rose as they entered, and making a profound bow, motioned his grandparent to the only chair in the place.

Balthasar Maria had never visited him before in this, his worst place of confinement ; and the bareness of the room, the dust and cobwebs, the excessive hardness of the chair, affected his sensitive heart, and, joined with irritation at his grandson's obstinacy and utter depression about the marriage, the grotto and the chapel, actually caused this magnanimous sovereign to burst into tears and bitter lamentations.

"It would indeed melt the heart of a stone," remarked the Jester sternly, while his two companions attempted to soothe the weeping

weeping duke—"to see one of the greatest, wisest, and most valorous princes in Europe reduced to tears by the undutifulness of his child."

"Princes, nay, kings' and emperors' sons," exclaimed the Dwarf, who was administering Melissa water to the duke, "have perished miserably for much less."

"Some of the most remarkable personages of sacred history are stated to have incurred eternal perdition for far slighter offences," added the Jesuit.

Alberic had sat down on the bed. The tawny sunshine fell upon his figure. He had grown very thin, and his garments were inexpressibly threadbare. But he was spotlessly neat, his lace band was perfectly folded, his beautiful blond hair flowed in exquisite curls about his pale face, and his whole aspect was serene and even cheerful. He might be twenty-two years old, and was of consummate beauty and stature.

"My lord," he answered slowly, "I entreat your Serene Highness to believe that no one could regret more deeply than I do such a spectacle as is offered by the tears of a Duke of Luna. At the same time, I can only reiterate that I accept no responsibility . . ."

A distant growling of thunder caused the old duke to start, and interrupted Alberic's speech.

"Your obstinacy, my lord," exclaimed the Dwarf, who was an excessively choleric person, "betrays the existence of a hidden conspiracy most dangerous to the state."

"It is an indication," added the Jester, "of a highly deranged mind."

"It seems to me," whispered the Jesuit, "to savour most undoubtedly of devilry."

Alberic shrugged his shoulders. He had risen from the bed to close

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close the grated window, into which a shower of hail was suddenly blowing with unparalleled violence, when the old duke jumped on his seat, and, with eyeballs starting with terror, exclaimed, as he tottered convulsively, "The serpent ! the serpent !"

For there, in a corner, the tame grass snake was placidly coiled up, sleeping.

"The snake ! the devil ! Prince Alberic's pet companion !" exclaimed the three favourites, and rushed towards that corner.

Alberic threw himself forward. But he was too late. The Jester, with a blow of his harlequin's lath, had crushed the head of the startled creature ; and, even while he was struggling with him and the Jesuit, the Dwarf had given it two cuts with his Turkish scimitar.

"The snake ! the snake !" shrieked Duke Balthasar, heedless of the desperate struggle.

The warders and equerries, waiting outside, thought that Prince Alberic must be murdering his grandfather, and burst into prison and separated the combatants.

"Chain the rebel ! the wizard ! the madman !" cried the three favourites.

Alberic had thrown himself on the dead snake, which lay crushed and bleeding on the floor, and he moaned piteously.

But the Prince was unarmed and overpowered in a moment. Three times he broke loose, but three times he was recaptured, and finally bound and gagged, and dragged away. The old duke recovered from his fright, and was helped up from the bed on to which he had sunk. As he prepared to leave, he approached the dead snake, and looked at it for some time. He kicked its mangled head with his ribboned shoe, and turned away laughing.

"Who knows," he said, "whether you were not the Snake Lady ? That foolish boy made a great fuss, I remember, when he

he was scarcely out of long clothes, about a tattered old tapestry representing that repulsive story."

And he departed to supper.

XIII

Prince Alberic of Luna, who should have been third of his name, died a fortnight later, it was stated, insane. But those who approached him maintained that he had been in perfect possession of his faculties ; and that if he refused all nourishment during his second imprisonment, it was from set purpose. He was removed at night from his apartments facing the grotto with the verde antique monkeys and the porphyry rhinoceros, and hastily buried under a slab, which remained without any name or date, in the famous mosaic sepulchral chapel.

Duke Balthasar Maria survived him only a few months. The old duke had plunged into excesses of debauchery with a view, apparently, to dismissing certain terrible thoughts and images which seemed to haunt him day and night, and against which no religious practices or medical prescription were of any avail. The origin of these painful delusions was probably connected with a very strange rumour, which grew to a tradition at Luna, to the effect that when the prison room, occupied by Prince Alberic, was cleaned, after that terrible storm of the 13th August of the year 1700, the persons employed found in a corner, not the dead grass-snake, which they had been ordered to cast into the palace drains, but the body of a woman, naked, and miserably disfigured with blows and sabre cuts.

Be this as it may, history records as certain, that the house of Luna became extinct in 1701, the duchy lapsing to the Empire. Moreover, that the mosaic chapel remained for ever unfinished, with

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no statue save the green bronze and gold one of Balthasar Maria above the nameless slab covering Prince Alberic ; and that the rockery also was never completed ; only a few marble animals adorning it besides the porphyry rhinoceros and the verde antique apes, and the water supply being sufficient only for the greatest holidays. These things the traveller can confirm ; also, that certain chairs and curtains in the porter's lodge of the now long deserted Red Palace are made of the various pieces of an extremely damaged arras, having represented the story of Alberic the Blond and the Snake Lady.

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